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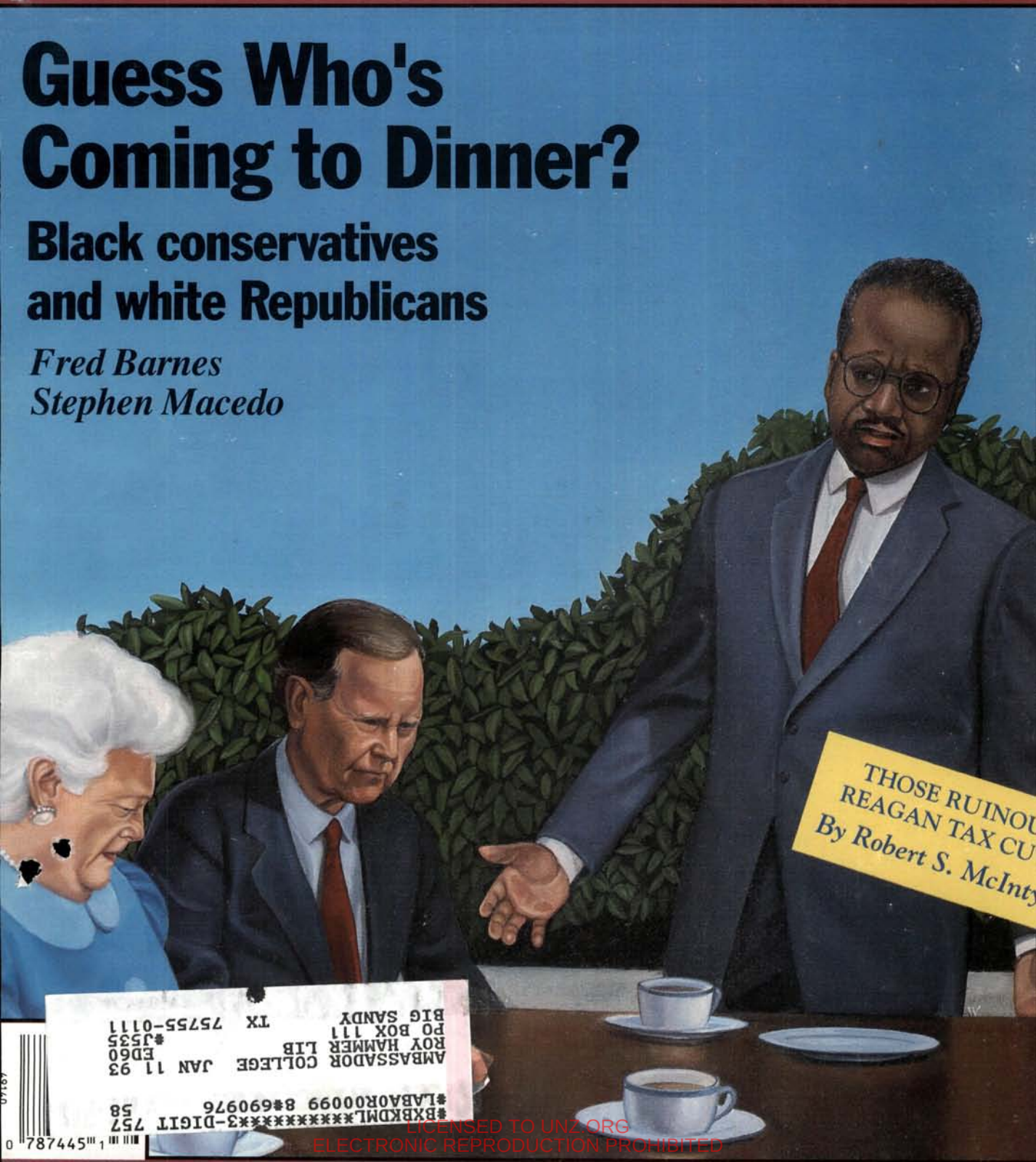
THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Frida Kahlo fraud · Laurence Tribe, Supreme Courtier · 'The Death of Klinghoffer'

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

Black conservatives and white Republicans

Fred Barnes
Stephen Macedo



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CORRESPONDENCE

Wouldn't be prudish

To the editors:

In his Diarist on sexual morality ("Prude and Prejudice," August 5), Morton Kondracke employs the terms "prude" and "puritan" precisely backward. The poor fellow surely does not mean to proclaim himself a prude and condemn Puritans.

Prudes (Phyllis Schlafly, Jesse Helms) are those self-appointed guardians afraid that somebody somewhere is having more fun than they are. Their cold-hearted sins often exceed the warm-hearted vices they condemn, and their pettiness gives chastity a bad name. They are merely cardboard stick-figures who manipulate morality to advance their own unhappiness.

The Puritans, on the other hand, despite their serious and industrious exteriors, were deeply passionate people. In some ways they were more matter-of-factly at ease dealing with sexuality than we moderns. In Puritan New England, for example, First Church of Boston once excommunicated James Mattock because he denied "conjugal fellowship to his wife for the space of two years." Talk about the prophetic witness of the Church! And in Puritan journals and diaries, fervent passion slips imperceptibly from the sensual to the spiritual, and back again.

And so in our age, where sexuality is merely one more form of entertainment to which everyone has a "right," a Puritan would be someone who takes sexuality seriously, i.e., would recognize that something so fraught with consequences fairly demands a grounding as solid as marriage. Here it is boundlessly celebrated as God's creative power at work. If that alarms some as "puritanical," then all I can say is: we should do so well.

DALE ROSENBERGER
Columbus, Ohio

The writer is senior minister at the First Congregational Church.

To the editors:

I was enraged and sadly disappointed by "Prude and Prejudice." The juxtaposition of the expressed concern for sexual promiscuity with statistics on sexual practices within the African-American community was disturbing but tolerable. In contrast, the tongue-in-cheek statement about young African-American men with beepers not being doctors is blatantly racist. Mr. Kondracke's prejudicial conclusion seems to have been based solely on ethnicity. Yet doctors who are completing the in-hospital portion of their training (residents) are usually in their early to mid-20s. Furthermore, many other legitimate jobs require that phone beepers be worn. Would Mr. Kondracke have drawn the same conclusion had the young men been of European ancestry?

DONALD E. WESSON, M.D.
Houston, Texas

Morton Kondracke replies:

Believe me: these were no med students. When my wife politely asked one of them to quit talking during the movie, he replied, "Shut up, you fuckin' bitch."

Dream on

To the editors:

I'd like to make one correction to Hendrik Hertzberg's Diarist ("Pennsylvania Dreamin'," September 2) on Senator Harris Wofford. Wofford was the second, not the first, male president of Bryn Mawr College. James Rhodes, who served as president from 1885 to 1894, was the first president, male or female, of the college.

ELIZABETH ENGDAL
Washington, D.C.
(Via 900 number)

Questionable judgment

To the editors:

In "It's OK To Ask" (TRB, August 5), Michael Kinsley argues that senators determining whether to consent to the nomination of Judge Thomas are entitled to the nominee's "analysis of the top dozen or so issues in constitutional law ... specific enough that the nominee's reputation for honesty is at stake in future rulings." This is a terrible idea for at least two reasons. First, the Supreme Court operates like the other American courts, via the adversarial process of opposing briefs and oral arguments.

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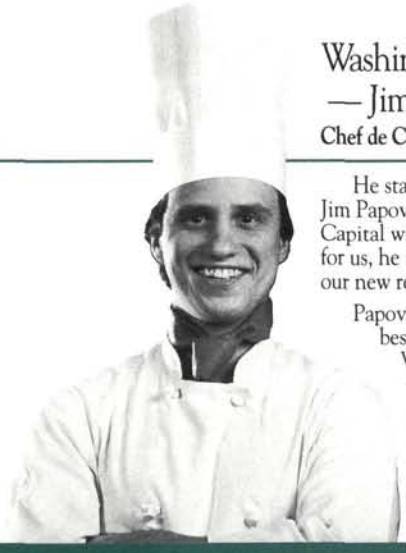

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FROM WASHINGTON

The Wichita case

One of the most mendacious chapters of the Reagan administration was the Bob Jones University episode of 1982. That was when the Justice Department reversed a long-standing government policy denying tax-exempt status to private schools that exclude blacks. Although the reversal was in response to a campaign by Southern conservatives, the administration piously insisted that its action implied no endorsement of tax exemptions for racist schools. They would sincerely like to deny these tax exemptions, Reagan officials maintained, but the law gave them no such authority. The Supreme Court soon called their bluff by ruling otherwise, 8-1.

The current controversy over Operation Rescue is the Bush administration's Bob Jones case. As in that earlier disgrace, the president and his associates are pandering to extremists while pretending with wide-eyed innocence that they are merely upholding the technicalities of the law.

Operation Rescue is the anti-abortion group that physically shuts down abortion clinics by blocking the entrances, lying under cars, surrounding and heckling patients, and so on. As founder Randall Terry says, when an abortion facility is under attack from Operation Rescue, "no one is permitted to enter." Last month in Wichita, Kansas, after Operation Rescue had shut down three abortion clinics, a federal judge ordered the group to stop and threatened to have its leaders arrested if it didn't. The Bush Justice Department then entered the case on the side of Operation Rescue, saying Judge Patrick F. Kelly had no authority to make this order.

Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, on his way out the door to run for the Senate, claimed the Justice Department action had nothing to do with abortion, which is still for the moment a constitutional right, or with support for Operation Rescue's tactics, which are incontestably illegal. After a day of bad press, President Bush even remarked that protests "ought to be done within the law." But what good is the law if it can't be enforced, and what good are constitutional rights if they can't be protected?

The power of federal judges to restrain Operation Rescue will be debated at the Supreme Court next month in *Bray* v. *Alexandria Women's Health Clinic.* In this case, too, the Justice Department has intervened on the side of Operation Rescue. At issue is a long tangle of constipated legal prose known as the K[redacted] Klan Act of 1871. The Klan Act was originally intended to authorize lawsuits against Klan persecution of blacks in the Reconstruction South, but it speaks more generally of conspiracies to deprive "any person or class of persons of the equal protection of the laws." Lower courts have held that this law may be used to restrain Operation Rescue.

In their briefs, Operation Rescue and the Justice Department offer half a dozen reasons why the Klan Act may not apply in this situation. Not all of them can be dismissed out of hand. In previous cases, the Court has left open the question whether the Klan Act protects any groups other than blacks. There is a question whether the group being oppressed in this case should be defined as "women" or as "women seeking abortions," and whether the latter category is acceptable under the law. One side says: not all women want abortions, or even support abortion rights. The other side replies: not all blacks tried to vote back in 1871, but the law protected those who did.

The Justice Department emphasizes, as if it were a virtue, that Operation Rescue does not merely aim to oppress women: "Petitioners direct their actions at anyone, whether male or female, who assists or is involved in the abortion process—doctors, nurses, counselors, boyfriends, husbands and family members, staff and others." Oh well, in that case go right ahead . . .

There is a question whether the law, which refers to suing for damages, authorizes judges to issue injunctions as well. Since most constitutional rights protect you only against deprivation by the government itself, not by private individuals, there is a question whether this limit also applies to the K[redacted] Act. Lower courts have avoided this particular complication by holding that Operation Rescue is violating not the right to choose abortion but the right to interstate travel, which does not require government involvement. But then there is a question whether the mere fact that many clinic patients come from out of state is enough to establish that this constitutional right is being violated.

My own conclusion, after reading the

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 30, 1991

WHAT FOREIGN POLICY?

It is now the unshakable shibboleth of American politics that whatever President Bush's failings domestically, his conduct of foreign affairs is unassailable. In an interview last month, to take a recent example, Democratic presidential candidate Douglas Wilder said he intends to concede George Bush "high marks" on foreign policy and to attack him on domestic policy alone. Polls suggest that this makes sense: Mr. Bush enjoys a 78 percent favorable rating for his handling of foreign affairs, compared with a 36 percent rating on the domestic economy.

This strategy of concession, however, has one flaw: Mr. Bush's conduct of foreign policy since taking office has been no shining example of professionalism and vision. Strewn with pragmatic errors and moral lapses, it has more the appearance of drift, interspersed with occasional improvisation. George Bush has had the good fortune to be president at a time when the dividends of a generation of the cold war have finally been paid. But he has done very little to capitalize on them; still less to present a coherent diplomatic strategy for the future.

Consider the last two years in several key regions of the world. In the old Soviet Union, Mr. Bush in his first few months misjudged the changes in that region, acting as if the conventions of the cold war were still in effect and urging greater vigilance. He then reversed that error by embracing another one: that Mikhail Gorbachev deserved to be the center of American diplomacy. With the shortsightedness that often accompanies personalized foreign policy, Mr. Bush built up this link to the old order and rattled the props of the new one—the leaders of the republics. Of course, it is not in the interests of the United States to provoke needless upheaval in Eurasia. But it is equally against our interests to be perceived supporting the ancien régime. The United States was behind the curve on Baltic independence, and our relations with the new republics are still unformed.

In the Middle East, the White House basks in the glory of the Gulf war and indeed deserves credit for part of its execution. But a critical war aim—the removal of Saddam Hussein from power—remains unaccomplished. The plight of the Kurds is no less acute; democracy in Kuwait, if ever seriously envisaged, is as chimeric as ever; an Iraq with nuclear capacity is an immediate possibility.

Worse, the leverage gained by the United States in the war has been expended on pressuring a key friend in the region—Israel—into concessions before a peace conference has even been convened. The means are a threat to block U.S. loan guarantees on $10 billion from Western bankers that Israel needs to settle 1 million Soviet Jewish immigrants. Israel has never defaulted on any loans previously offered and there is no immediate cost to the American taxpayer, so it is hard to see what American interest this measure serves. If anything, it jeopardizes our capacity to act as a neutral arbiter at any conference. Credits to Middle Eastern nations have rarely been eschewed by the Bush administration before: compare those given to Saddam Hussein until the brink of his invasion of Kuwait. The White House claims it is asking for a four-month delay in order to get Middle East peace talks started, but this is disingenuous: the Arab states are willing to go to a conference even if Israel doesn't cease settlements beforehand. And there has been no demand for any reciprocal concession from the Arab states. So why the sustained obsession, unique in the Bush-Baker foreign policy, and with no tangible American interest at stake?

In Europe, the administration's strategy has been equally shortsighted. At the start, it focused on the newly unified Germany as the linchpin of American relations with the continent. But this strategy failed to recognize that both history and the enormous strain of unification would cripple the German government's

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ability to act as an autonomous ally. Germany was thus a bystander in the Gulf war; its policy at every stage of the Soviet convulsion was one of narrow self-interest (see "Checkpoint Freddie" by Ronald Steel, page 7). Far from being a new superpower, Germany turned out to be an inward-looking weakling, and American policy was consequently adrift.

With the European Community, where change is occurring of potentially far greater significance for our economic future than the events in Eurasia, Mr. Bush pursued a policy that he has alternated between nonchalance and foolishness. The president is right to support greater Western European integration—but has been seen in Europe as supporting those countries, most notably France, that seek a community more protectionist and less open to the new democracies of the East than would otherwise be the case.

In Asia, the administration's policy has been a mix of deluded realpolitik and indifference to human rights. With the Chinese dictatorship, the White House has conducted a romance that makes the early appeasement of Saddam seem unexceptionable, and has defended it with unseemly arrogance. The post-Tiananmen cynicism should not be forgotten; nor should the betrayal of the people of Hong Kong and Tibet. With the other brutal regime of the region, Burma, the United States has consistently balked at acting swiftly or decisively in defense of the beleaguered democratic forces in that country. In South Africa too, the administration wisely ended sanctions but has failed to do much else. Its help in building democratic institutions and encouraging liberal constitutional change is desperately needed, but hardly anywhere to be found.

Throughout, the administration has not seen that there is a relationship between its domestic policies and its conduct of foreign affairs; that the gross mishandling of this nation's finances has constrained any realistic measures to respond to the brave new world now in front of us. And more fatally, it has failed to grasp the two essential movements of its world: the growing clamor for democracy and the related impulse for national sovereignty. Its instinct has always been the status quo: the Chinese leadership against the students of Tiananmen Square; the Soviet center against the emergent republics; the state of Yugoslavia against the aspirations of Croats or Macedonians; the pan-Arabist delusion against the new Middle Eastern reality in the wake of the Gulf war; the dirigiste, exclusionary European Community against the growing claims of the Eastern European states; inaction rather than tangible, practical aid for the new democracies in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. These represent not merely unfortunate failures of judgment, but important opportunities missed, unique chances fumbled. They speak less of a grip on a "new world order" than a desperate, befuddled attempt to keep up with new world change.

To be sure, these have been bewildering times, and an element of cautious reactiveness is understandable. There have also been successes: the free trade agreement with Mexico, the erection of the multilateral coalition against Saddam Hussein. No grave harm has come to any American interest as a result of Bush management—yet. But the administration's foreign policy should be judged not simply on the basis of disasters avoided or of fortune graciously met. On broader grounds, it has shown itself utterly fallible: weak on pragmatism, vacuous in imagination, devoid of foresight, suspect in morality. The fact that the Democrats believe this record should be conceded before it is even debated shows how desperate their plight has become.

NOTEBOOK

BOZELL'S CIRCUS: The real legacy of the Bork hearings—the media circus around Supreme Court nominations—shows no sign of abating. The most egregious bit so far is the TV ad produced by L. Brent Bozell III of the Media Research Center. The ad, which Bozell is airing in defiance of President Bush's wishes, out-Borks the Borkers by attacking Democratic Senators Kennedy, Biden, and Cranston for moral lapses. Less repulsive, but no less desperate, is the attempt by the lobby group People for the American Way to nail Clarence Thomas for trips he took as chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The group charges that Thomas should have reimbursed the government for trips where he made speeches that didn't relate directly to his job, including one to Columbus, Ohio, to address a group that works against child abuse. This is silly nitpicking; these weren't Sununu-style ski outings. But People for the American Way isn't even consistent in its accusation. The group was happy to overlook speeches Thomas made to black groups that didn't relate to his work at the EEOC, because, a spokesman claimed, he was the top-ranking black official in the Reagan administration. Sam Pierce, the secretary of housing and urban development, actually was the top black official. But then Reagan couldn't remember him, either.

ALEKSANDR BESSMERTNYKH AWARD: The government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has issued a seventy-eight-page white paper devoted to proving that its fence-sitting in the Gulf crisis was in fact support for the winning side. In the words of a cover letter from the embassy's director of information, Dr. Marwan Muasher: "I hope this paper will help confirm the fact that Jordan never condoned or supported the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait or the subsequent annexation. Any other position would have been a direct contradiction of Jordan's long-standing position that the acquisition of territory by force is illegal and unacceptable." We are glad to hear that King Hussein is feeling better, now that the crisis is over. •

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BERLIN POSTCARD

CHECKPOINT FREDDIE

By Ronald Steel

On the first night of the Soviet coup, when it seemed that Gorbachev was a goner, hundreds of Berliners gathered in front of the Soviet Embassy next to the Brandenburg Gate. They carried candles, pictures of the fallen leader, and signs saying things like: "Gorbachev Gave Us Freedom and Unity." He is a kind of hero in Germany. People know that unification would never have happened without him. This is why Germany has been in the forefront of aid to what, for lack of a better word, we shall still call the Soviet Union.

Now that the Russians are down and temporarily out, the Germans are also allowing themselves to feel a bit guilty for all the bad things they have done to them. A current exhibit in Berlin is titled "The War Against the Soviet Union." It could have been called "The Second World War" or "The War on the Eastern Front," but significantly it isn't. The Germans also know that if hunger and chaos sweep the Soviet Union, they are likely to be invaded by hordes of refuge-seeking Russians, which, on top of all the current refugees from Eastern Europe, is something they do not happily contemplate.

The coup took place a few days after the festivities at nearby Potsdam over the reburial of Frederick the Great. To some, and particularly to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who used the occasion to celebrate himself and his party, it was an overdue honor to the father of German unity. To others, particularly on the left, it was a nationalistic spectacle milked for political purposes. Actually this was Frederick's fourth reburial. He had been moved around Germany to escape the incoming Russians during the war, and temporarily interred in the south until he could be returned to his palace at Sans Souci outside Berlin.

The humanistic emperor, who wrote music and poetry, defended philosophers and writers, among them his great chum Voltaire, was hardly a good model either for burial spectacles or German nationalism. He spoke only French at his court, declaring that German was fit only for speaking to his horse. And he left firm instructions that he should be buried at midnight with only his valet and his two faithful dogs in attendance. Well, last month he was reburied at midnight all right, but in the company of 100,000 revelers, TV crews, an army guard of honor, and scores of camera-seeking Bonn politicians. The opposition Social Democrats stayed home, as did the modest German president, Richard Weiszacker. Kohl, who had invited himself to what was presumably a family occasion, declared that he was attending only as a private citizen to pay his respects.

Like Friedrich, Kohl vastly enlarged the country. But few people are giving him much credit for it these days. It long ago became evident that Kohl was either lying or uninformed when, just before elections, he promised that the cost of unification would involve no sacrifice. Already there have been tax hikes (with more to come), inflation, and a falling deutsche mark. The East is a catastrophe zone. Foreign and even German investors have shied away, unemployment has reached 40 percent in some areas, and the political situation in the East is unstable, with neo-Nazi youth gangs prominent in every major city of the old Communist state.

The Wall came down in Berlin nearly two years ago, and there is hardly a trace of it left—except on the card tables around the Brandenburg Gate and Checkpoint Charlie, where bits and pieces are wrapped in plastic and sold to tourists. Most of these stands are run by Eastern Europeans, predominantly Poles who, now that visa restrictions have been removed, have flooded the city and perform odd jobs without work permits. Whereas not long ago there was a Wall around Berlin, now there seems to be nothing but bridges. The city has become a haven for Eastern Europeans dislocated by poverty, xenophobia, racism, and all the other ills in which that area now abounds.

Few West Berliners ever bothered to go over to visit the other part of the city, unless they had relatives there, and even fewer go today. Their explanation is simple: there is no reason to go. Except for the opera and theater, which used to be cheap but are no longer, the place lacks the accoutrements that people in a sophisticated metropolis expect: cafés, discos, movies, bars, boutiques, street life. If anything, East Berlin is even drabber than before the Wall came down. Then, at least, it was the capital of a country with pretensions to be a showplace of communism. Now it is just a gray backwater, waiting for the billions of marks it would take to restore it to life.

Eventually the heart of East Berlin, which is actually at the center point of a united city, will be restored to its old role as the focus of government and commerce. International firms are slowly moving in, as conspicuous and nervous as early arrivals at a dance, more in anticipation of activity than to satisfy current demand. On Friedrich Strasse, just a few blocks from the now torn-down Checkpoint Charlie, stands a new watering spot called The Oscar Wilde. Describing itself as a "Traditional Irish Bar," it even looks like one, inside and out, but it is still waiting—like the Yamaha and Mercedes-Benz showrooms—for the affluent consumers who were supposed to follow unification.

East Berlin seems even spookier today than it did when the Wall was in place. In the old days, when you crossed through the guards and the barricades and the dogs, you knew you were entering another world, and it looked like one. The neon lights of West Berlin faded quickly into memory as you maneuvered potholed streets, bullet-scarred buildings untouched since the war, prefab apart-

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ment buildings that showed signs of decay even before they were completed, and an occasional showplace to demonstrate that East Germany was a real country.

Still, the place has a certain grandeur. It was, after all, the imperial heart of the Kaiser's Berlin. Along the majestic Unter den Linden, as it emerged from the Brandenburg Gate, the great imperial structures of nineteenth-century Germany were built to proclaim the nation's wealth and power. This was perhaps the most impressive promenade in Europe. On its flanks rose the Museum island, the Kaiser's palace, Humboldt University, St. Hedwig's Cathedral, the French church, the opera house, and three Shinckel masterpieces: the Schauspielhaus, the Altes Museum, and the Neue Wache. The Communist regime of East Germany, seeking legitimacy above all, naturally chose to find it in these symbols of imperial Prussia. Some of these buildings were restored to their former grandeur—despite the grumbling of those who believed the money should be spent on apartments for the ill-housed people of East Germany—to proclaim that the real Berlin lay in the East. To prove it they subsidized two opera companies—both arguably better than the overpriced one in the West—and dozens of theaters, orchestras, and museums. The people may have lived miserably, but they had good music and art at cheap prices. All this was, of course, very German. Before unification in the nineteenth century the princely states tried to outdo one another in the symbols of culture (rather as American cities build sports arenas), which is why German provincial cities to this day are rich in the equipment of culture.

The East Germans even made Frederick the Great their own, restoring the enormous equestrian statue to its old place of honor on the Unter den Linden. A few years earlier they sponsored a worldwide festival in honor of another of their ur-citizens, Martin Luther. Frederick was a symbol for Erich Honecker and his regime, just as he is for Kohl and his. Although at first it was a bit of a shock to see this Prussian emperor standing guard over the decaying palaces of his former kingdom and the glass and concrete headquarters of the Communist bureaucracy, he soon became a familiar sight. He seemed particularly impressive on misty winter nights when the Unter den Linden was typically empty of cars and people. Rising majestically, rather like Mozart's *commendatore*, he evoked symbols of past power and glory.

Today he has been expropriated by the politicians in Bonn, who use him for their own purposes. Germany probably needs such symbols. A nation grafted together from two disparate parts—rather like fusing California and Baja, or Quebec and the Northeast United States—has to believe in something other than the power of consumerism. The West Germans are rich, the East Germans want to be. This much they have in common. The rest relies on memory, hope, and expectation. There is a lot of that around here these days, at least in the East. But, like the instant entrepreneurs around the Brandenburg Gate, with their card tables laden with bits of the Wall and the detritus of the departing Red army, it seems a shaky foundation on which to build a nation. •

The day the tanks stood still.

TO THE BARRICADES

By Gregory Freidin

MOSCOW

As she stuck her hand through a police barrier, a heavy-set middle-aged woman whispered to a pimply young sentry guarding a bevy of mean-looking armored personnel carriers lined up near Red Square: "Sonny, hey sonny, here's a candy bar, go ahead, take it, please." "Against regulations," he muttered shaking his head, hands gripping a Kalashnikov, and added almost inaudibly: "Stick it in my pocket, fast." The hand lunged forward—and a tiny chocolate bar disappeared into the pants pocket of the soldier's fatigues. Further on more of the same: chocolates, cigarettes, sandwiches sliding into the pockets of the young soldiers standing guard before their APCs, as their officers look the other way, both embarrassed by the soldiers' mendicancy and moved by the crowd's consideration and warmth. Occasional latecomers to the revolution, eager to show their militant resolve, worked their way to the barrier and began to berate the soldiers, exhorting them to come over to the people's side, to join Yeltsin and Russia. The soldiers, mostly Slavic-looking, winked and smiled from under their rain hoods.

On Monday morning, having deposed and, possibly, disposed of the country's president, the self-appointed Emergency Committee declared an all-out war on the opposition. It was hard to imagine at 8:30 a.m. that there was another power in the Soviet Union that could accept the challenge of those who had taken over the omnipotent central state. Yet the recently installed mechanism of the separation of powers was already working. By late morning Yeltsin was climbing a tank—a big tank dispatched to bring this big man to his knees—to thunder away at the junta and to pronounce its actions illegal. A lone member of the Union Cabinet, Minister for the Environment Nikolai Vorontsov, a deputy of Russia's Supreme Soviet, joined Yeltsin on the tank to the cheers, as he told me later that day, of a couple of hundred people. For a space the size of the Capitol steps, this was a sparse crowd.

No more than an hour earlier, on my way to the writers' enclave in Peredelkino, I had asked my taxi driver to circle once around the White House, the seat of Russia's Parliament: all was calm and ordinary, as befits a government building on a sleepy Monday morning in August (inside Yeltsin, Khasbulatov, and Silaev were denouncing the committee as unconstitutional to the Moscow press corps). As we drove west through the outskirts of the city, a column of tanks,

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APCs, and trucks full of armed soldiers was rumbling in the opposite direction. By the time we turned off the main highway half an hour later, I had counted 150 tanks and APCs.

"This is my fourth coup d'état," confided the 91-year-old writer I went to Peredelkino to visit. I inscribed her volume of my Russian translation of *The Federalist Papers*, published a few months ago in the United States: "To Tamara Ivanova, on the day of her fourth coup d'état." Starved for news, we turned on the TV only to be treated to a splendiferous Bolshoi production of *Swan Lake*. The sole channel that was broadcasting over most of the country was teasing the viewers, at the brink of a civil war, with a preserved vestige of Russia's imperial adornment. The news blackout lasted throughout the coup, but on the second day an inventive soul in programming ran a concert hall production of *Boris Godunov*—an operatic blast at regicides, silent majorities, and pretenders. "Come to think of it, I have lived through six coups d'état," Ivanova corrected herself as we were parting. I amended my inscription accordingly. The book now seemed no more than a cruel reminder of yet another chance that Russia had missed.

Part of the tank column I had run into earlier was already parked on the center lane on the Kalinin bridge opposite the White House. A cop was blocking the traffic, but in such a dazed and halfhearted way that my taxi driver jumped the curb under his very nose and sped without looking back to the other end of the bridge. There something strange was going on. The column of tanks stopped short of a flimsy barrier made of sections of a wire mesh fencing behind which a dozen or so people were silently pushing an empty trolley bus. "It must've stalled," I said to myself and wondered why they were pushing it at a right angle to the line of traffic. Next to the trolley bus, a small crowd consisting of two respectable-looking women and several men in business suits and attaché cases was pursuing a weaving milk truck. One of the men managed to jump onto the step of the cabin but was immediately pushed off by the irate driver: "You motherfuckers, I am the one who'll be paying for it, not you...." They were trying to commandeer the truck. Only then did it dawn on me that I was witnessing the construction of a barricade.

Farther up, where the bridge formed a thoroughfare with the road leading to the embankment and the White House, half a dozen tanks had already taken up positions, their gun barrels trained quizzically onto an empty patch of overcast sky between the Russia House and the famous ghost tower of the new American Embassy. The leading tank peeked out dinosaurlike from behind a barricade consisting solely of a ten-foot-long garden bench. Up close you could see the insignia of one of Moscow's two elite tank divisions. A helmeted soldier sitting on top of the gun turret displayed that intensely sullen and distant look that one readily associates with the actual Soviet man engaged in actual socialist construction. Before long, neighborhood kids were crawling all over the armor, their presence transforming the tank if not into plowshares, then into a heavy-duty tenement jungle gym. Taking in this scene, my eye paused to register a few inch-thick metal bars, used for reinforcing concrete, sticking out of the wheels of the tank treads. The bars disabled the vehicle, but the soldiers were in no hurry to take them out.

A young man in his 20s was now climbing on top of the tank. Leaning against the gun barrel and without any regard for the soldier, he began waving Russia's tricolor flag. "Folks in the 'White House' say you ought to stick another flag into the gun barrel," an unassuming elderly woman whispered loudly to the flag-waver. "Tell 'em I can't do it: the gun is sheathed," he hissed back, his face showing that he was at the limit of his pluck, and with added fervor went on making figure eights with his giant tricolor. Did the people holed up in the "White House," for whose benefit the flag was being waved, find in this sight the needed encouragement?

The news spread that tanks were coming along Kalininsky Prospekt from the direction of the city center. By 3:00 p.m. the crowd, which had swelled to a few hundred, rushed to the end of the avenue that opened onto the "White House." Men and women, mostly well-dressed types in their 30s and 40s, scurried around in search of barricade-building debris. As barricade-building goes, Moscow is Europe's most efficient city. You don't have to overturn cars or newspaper booths, or tear up roads for the sake of the archetypal cobblestones, because the city's construction bosses have unwittingly positioned stores of debris within everybody's easy reach. Unfinished buildings, torn-up roads, and mounds of fragments of reinforced concrete are as plentiful in Moscow as outdoor cafés are in Paris. Past me marched a team of several men shouldering a heavy pipe, their shopping bags and attaché cases swaying in unison.

A column of light tanks and heavy APCs was rumbling along Kalininsky Prospekt. The fortification, supposed to block their passage, consisted of see-through wire mesh screens strung across the street, held erect by some sort of telepathy or magic. To shield this contraption from the caterpillar treads, men and women joined hands to form a chain across the breadth of the avenue. The approaching column, headed by a tanklike thing but without a turret, slowed to a crawl. It halted a few feet before the human chain, filling the air with the noise and stench of idling diesel engines. People rushed around the leading vehicle, some shouting heart-rending pleas not to shoot, others hurling insults at the helmeted head of the convoy commander that was sticking forlornly out of the vehicle's top hatch. "Shame!" "Don't shoot at your own people!" "Yeltsin is your president!" "Junta's lackeys!" "Murderers!" "Be with the people!"

The commander climbed halfway out of the hatch. This exhausted wiry man of about 40 was wearing a paratrooper's uniform with the two stars of a lieutenant

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colonel. Crouching behind him was a junior officer, a beefy young man with an anxious smile, cradling in his enormous arms a handy little automatic rifle. Red-eyed, his face the color of dust-covered asphalt, the commander had the tormented look of a rudely awakened man who was ordered to choose between his duty as an army officer and killing his own mother. The worst was still to come. Waving his half-empty string bag at the commander, a grizzled diminutive man—a lifetime of labor stamped into his demeanor—elbowed his way to the side of the tank. He was shaking with rage. Almost bursting to make himself heard over the engine noise, he shouted: "I've worked all my life, you see, all my life I've paid for this army, and now you've turned against me, you're shooting at me!" "Shame, shame!" the crowd was egging him on. Several people were pressing into the officer's hands Xerox copies of the Russian government's first appeal, issued at 9:00 a.m., calling the Emergency Committee "unconstitutional," its members "putschists," and declaring an "indeterminate general strike." Many were yelling: "You did vote for Yeltsin, didn't you, you yourself voted for Yeltsin, and now you've got your guns pointing at him." The officer would not take the bait, but his gold-toothed smile made it clear that he did not mind being counted among Yeltsin supporters.

A young man in blue jeans climbed on top of the tank, helping onto the armor two stylish young women. Like many in the crowds around the "White House," all three had about them the secure air of people who "owned the place." Nonchalantly, they took a brief survey of the tank's top, located a comfortable spot, and settled down, park-bench style, for a chat and a smoke. But before their charm could begin to melt the armor, a corpulent matron, her graying hair in a tight bun, wrestled her way to the front of the tank and began to bellow at the officers. Gesticulating forcefully, as if unaware that her hands were ensnared by a brace of string bags, she pointed to her breast and roared: "I've nurtured you bastards, and now you will be shooting me in this breast!" A vein on the commander's temple, which had been pulsating visibly throughout the encounter, swelled enormously, his dust-covered face grew ruddy, jaws clenched, but his eyes were clearly pleading to spare him this unbearable ordeal. His aide let go of the rifle, and it disappeared down the hatch. "Cut off the engine, commander, save your fuel for the crops!" The engine was stopped, and minutes later every vehicle in the convoy followed suit. No, he will not obey if ordered to shoot at the people, he said to the French reporter in reply to the question on everybody's mind.

The family reunion was now in full swing. The paratroopers had not eaten for twenty-four hours and had been on the march for two days, since leaving their base in Ryazan. The contents of the barricade-builders' shopping bags—those unprepossessing horns of plenty stuffed with sausage, bread, candy, cartons of milk—flowed freely into the open hatches of the paratroopers' tanks and APCs. An hour or so later, an order came for the convoy to leave. The street grew empty, exposing to all the vicissitudes of a revolution the still flimsy barricade and the wearied, vulnerable men and women who had the determination to build it. There were the people, there was their government that the people had gathered to defend, and there was the enemy, epitomized by the old Communist state. There was a nation in the making.

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The Mideast's eternal fantasy.

TRACK II

By Conor Cruise O'Brien

The Middle East Peace Conference, about which so much is currently being heard, is one of those mirages characteristic of the region. This particular mirage has been flickering for nearly twenty years now. The last major sighting was on December 21, 1973, when the Geneva (Peace) Conference opened, and closed. It wasn't really a conference at all: it had neither agenda nor terms of reference nor rules of procedure: it was essentially a photo opportunity. Those who posed for the pictures were the representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan, plus the president of the so-called conference, the then Secretary General of United Nations Kurt Waldheim.

That conference never met again, but it remained in theoretical existence. It functioned as a kind of symbolic backdrop to the real diplomatic business of that period: the energetic bilateral negotiations of Henry Kissinger. Jimmy Carter from 1975-77 strove earnestly to revive the Geneva Conference but was diverted on to other lines (bilateral and then trilateral) by Anwar Sadat. The mirage faded then for some time but was seen to flicker in quite a lively manner on the eve of Desert Storm. The United States and Britain, fearing the defection of their Arab allies after the deaths on the Temple Mount, sought to convince them that a real effort would be made to "solve the Palestinian problem" once the Gulf crisis was over. The symbol of this effort was the Middle East Conference. The administration now fears that this conference will be jeopardized if Congress does not delay consideration of Israel's request for loan guarantees until the conference is held (next month, perhaps).

What seems surprising about all of this is how seri-

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ously the Bush administration—both before and after Desert Storm—appears to take the ritual expressions of concern for the Palestinians that frequently fall from the lips of America's Arab allies. There was never any chance that the allies in question would defect from the alliance over Palestine. They were allies out of solid calculations of their own interests, and Palestine did not, and does not, enter into those calculations—except insofar as playing hard to get over Palestine may help to advance their real interests; and that is indeed a factor in the game. I suspect they are surprised at how seriously the United States takes their Palestinian professions. They know that the Palestinians hate them almost as much as they hate the United States and Israel, and they have no intention of providing the Palestinians with any kind of base, on the West Bank or elsewhere—or indeed of providing them with anything, other than expressions of concern.

Theoretically, Secretary of State James A. Baker's Middle East peace negotiations are conducted on "two tracks": one is for peace between Israel and the Palestinians, the other for peace between Israel and Arab states. In reality the first track is solidly blocked. Only the second track is open for traffic—at present mostly camouflaged—between Israel and Syria.

Although both Americans and Israelis—and also Arab leaders—know that the Israeli-Palestinian track is hopelessly blocked, they will continue to talk, at length, as though it were not. Peace between Israel and Syria will be pursued with an accompanying emphasis on the discussion of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The reasons for this are apparent when we consider the great precedent case: the 1977-79 process that led to a peace treaty. That process was initiated by Sadat. What Sadat was aiming at was the recovery of his lost national territory: Sinai. (Assad today has a corresponding motive: the recovery of the Golan Heights.) But Sadat wanted an ostensible inclusion of Palestine in the peace process—partly to reply to his Arab critics and partly to please Carter, who was publicly committed to the mirage of "a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East." So Camp David led to not just one "Framework" but two. There was a "Framework for a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel," which was the business end of the deal, and there was the "Framework for Peace" (mainly about the West Bank and Gaza). The "Framework for Peace" was a sham. In private, Sadat didn't even pretend to take it seriously. As Carter noted, apparently with surprise, Sadat "was not particularly interested in the Framework for Peace." Why should he be? There was nothing in it for Egypt.

Israel is in a stronger position after the Gulf war than it was before. There must be many people who have not yet forgotten those Palestinians cheering Saddam's Scuds on their way to Tel Aviv and Haifa, at a time when Israel, at the request of the United States, was refraining from any military response to Iraq's aggression. Many must also have noticed the applause coming from PLO spokesmen in Tunis for the attempted coup in Moscow. When Israel's friends in Congress oppose the Bush administration's request for delay of loan guarantees, they will have some strong arguments on their side. And if Congress does go ahead with the loan guarantees, the Arab states are not about to boycott the Middle East conference. They will take part in the American charade, since they need the Americans and the other superpower has collapsed. But first, once again, the Arab allies will play a little hard to get. They will seek something to console them, in their grief over Palestine. And they should be consoled, in precise proportion to the grief they feel.

CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN is the author most recently of *Passion & Cunning: Essays on Nationalism, Terrorism and Revolution* (Simon and Schuster).

The Reagan legacy.

BORROW 'N' SQUANDER

By Robert S. McIntyre

Have you ever felt you're paying too much for what you get from the government? One of the legacies of the Reagan-Bush era is that middle-income families are paying more of their income in federal taxes than they used to, while getting far less back in programs and services. So why is the government running such huge deficits? Lower spending and higher taxes are supposed to be the standard prescription for reducing the deficit, not enlarging it. The answer is quite simple. Tax cuts for the very richest people and interest on the debt that was built up to pay for those cuts can explain the entire increase in the federal deficit over the past fifteen years.

Based on data from the Congressional Budget Office, I calculate that the richest million Americans—the top 1 percent of all families—will pay 30 percent less in federal taxes in 1992 than they would owe had the tax code remained as progressive as it was in 1977. (I use 1977 as the base year because it is just before the two "supply-side" tax acts: the 1981 Reagan tax act and its precursor, the 1978 capital gains tax cut.) That 30 percent tax cut amounts to an average tax reduction of $83,460 per super-rich family. In total, it comes to almost $84 billion in 1992.

But that's not all. The tax reduction for the very rich was not a one-shot, one-year event. It has been a growing cost to the Treasury over the past fifteen years, and it was paid for with borrowed money. The federal government did not have to increase its borrowing rate in the 1980s to pay for additional spending on programs and services. Social Security has amassed a large surplus, and the over-

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all cost of all non-Social Security programs except interest and deposit insurance actually declined as a share of the gross national product from 1980 to 1990.

But the government did have to borrow—heavily—to pay for corporate and upper-income tax cuts. In fact, if everything else had been the same except for those tax cuts, then government borrowing over the past fifteen years would have been more than a trillion dollars lower than it was. What does adding more than a trillion dollars to the national debt mean to the annual budget deficit? A huge increase in yearly interest payments. In fact, the interest due on the debt built up to pay for previous years' tax cuts for the very wealthy will be nearly $81 billion in 1992.

Thus the total 1992 cost of the supply-side tax reductions for the richest million families—adding up the $84 billion tax cut that they will enjoy in 1992 and the $81 billion in interest the government must pay on the debt incurred due to tax cuts for the rich in previous years—comes to a staggering $164 billion! Now, from fiscal 1977-78 to fiscal 1992-93, the federal deficit will have almost doubled as a share of the GNP—from 2.8 percent to 5.1 percent. That's an increase of $143 billion in fiscal 1992-93. So the deficit is up by $143 billion, while tax cuts for the wealthy cost $164 billion.

This is hardly a coincidence. The growing cost of tax cuts for the rich closely parallels the growth in the deficit over the past decade. From fiscal '82-'83 to fiscal '90-'91, the average budget deficit was 1.7 percent of the GNP larger than in fiscal '77-'78. In that same period, the cost of tax cuts for the richest 1 percent since 1977 (including interest) averaged 1.9 percent of the GNP. Of course, the correspondence is not perfect in every year. In the early '80s, with the defense build-up, deficit growth outpaced the rich's tax cuts. In the late '80s, after defense had passed its peak as a share of the GNP, the opposite took place. In the fiscal '91-'93 period, however, the relationship is almost exact: the deficit is up by 2.6 percent of the GNP and tax cuts for the wealthy cost 2.6 percent of the GNP.

How can tax cuts for such a small proportion of our population cause such a large drop in tax revenues, and loom so large in the deficit picture? It's simple arithmetic. The really rich get a huge share of our nation's total income. In 1992 the richest 1 percent of the population will make $678 billion before taxes. That's more than the total income of the bottom 40 percent of all families. The $2.4 trillion of income concentrated on the top fifth of the nation's population is greater than the total income of the remaining four-fifths of American families.

While the rich got tax cuts, what about the rest of us? The CBO data show that for three out of four families (all but those in the poorest fifth and best-off 5 percent) federal taxes are now higher than in 1977. (Taxes on the poor were up for most of the '80s but were cut back to pre-Reagan levels in last year's deficit reduction act.) For families in the middle fifth of the income spectrum (making about $32,000 a year), for instance, the average tax hike is $280.

The deal that the federal government offers average families looks even worse when you factor in spending changes. In fiscal 1990 interest on the national debt was up by 1.7 percent of the GNP compared with fiscal 1980—an increase of $94 billion in fiscal 1990 dollars. The cost of deposit insurance—zero in fiscal 1980—was almost $60 billion due to the savings and loan fiasco. And though down from its lofty mid-'80s apex, defense still cost $28 billion more in fiscal 1990 than in fiscal 1980 (in GNP-adjusted dollars).

Over the same period, however, spending on the entire rest of the government excluding Social Security fell from 9.9 percent of the GNP to 7.4 percent—a drop in 1990 dollars of $130 billion! Spending on the justice system and general government was 42 percent lower. Education and training outlays were down by 40 percent. Programs for the environment and natural resources were cut by 39 percent. Spending on roads and transportation dropped by 32 percent. Welfare and unemployment outlays went down by 21 percent. In total, the $130 billion decline in those traditional federal programs and services means that the typical family now gets an average of $1,260 less from the government each year in such benefits.

George Will has quipped that the public liked Reaganomics because it gave them $1 worth of government for only 75 cents in taxes (the rest being borrowed). But for most families, the truth is exactly the opposite. Compared with a decade ago, middle-income families are getting a fourth *less* in traditional federal government services for every dollar they pay in taxes.

The "supply-side" redistribution of taxes and spending occurred even as incomes were shifting as well. The CBO estimates that from 1977 to 1992, average constant-dollar pretax income will decline by 13 percent for the poorest fifth of all families; fall by 10 percent for the next fifth; and drop by 7 percent for the middle fifth. The average income of families in the next 20 percent will rise by only 1 percent. But the richest 1 percent of the population will see its average inflation-adjusted income rise from $314,500 in 1977 to $675,900 in 1992—an increase of 115 percent.

The combination of the tax and income shifts in favor of the wealthy caused the share of total after-tax income going to the richest 2 percent of Americans to jump from 7.3 percent to 13.4 percent of the total—an increase of 84 percent. Meanwhile, the share of after-tax income fell for every other group except the best-off 5 percent.

Had the tax code remained as progressive as in 1977, there still would have been a shift in after-tax income toward the wealthy. But it would have been considerably less than actually occurred. On its own, the 30 percent tax cut that the top 1 percent will enjoy in 1992 explains almost two-fifths of this group's increased share of after-tax income. Without that tax cut, the rich's share of

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total income would be 11.1 percent of the total, rather than 13.4 percent. In addition, the tax changes contributed substantially to the huge gains that rich people obtained in their *pretax* incomes, due to their increased investment earnings on the portion of their tax cuts that they didn't immediately spend.

The purported rationale for the redistributionist supply-side policy, of course, was the old "trickle-down" theory that lower taxes on wealthy people and corporations would produce a boom in savings and investment. To its credit, Congress eventually recognized that the trickle-down approach was an abject failure, and reversed course. The monumental 1986 Tax Reform Act took back a quarter of the tax cuts that the richest 5 percent had received in earlier tax-giveaway bills and rolled back some of the previous tax increases that had hit most non-wealthy families, particularly the poor. And it made critical structural changes in the tax code to curb tax shelter abuses.

Last year Congress resisted the efforts of the Bush administration to raise taxes sharply on middle- and low-income families and to cut taxes even further on the rich. Instead, the deficit reduction act took back another small portion of the wealthy's tax cut and reduced taxes on the poorest families to their pre-Reaganomics level. But the sorry legacy of the Borrow 'n' Squander 1980s still looms over us. Only by restoring real tax fairness can we hope to solve our deficit problem—and start getting the government services and investments that our tax dollars are supposed to provide.

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Once more into the vacuum.

THE HALF-PRESIDENT

By Sidney Blumenthal

For George Bush, outside forces have often fortuitously intervened to provide him with momentum he cannot summon alone. In 1988 Bush's most miserable period of decay was the few months after he had secured the Republican nomination but before the heaven-sent Michael Dukakis gained the Democratic one. In 1990, after his politically disastrous budget deal, the Gulf war suddenly provided a critical direction. In the summer of 1991 the second Russian Revolution helpfully arrived just as Bush began to face criticism that his presidency had stalled domestically. Without such interventions, Bush's natural inertia has quickly led to entropy. In the absence of the external factor—the deus ex machina—he simply runs down.

Now, as the 1992 campaign draws near, and another stalling threatens, his quest for "the vision thing" has been renewed. "Bush's philosophy is not what you would call a philosophy," says one of his aides who has been assigned to find it. "He has a philosophy. We just don't know what it is." Bush, however, does have a novel, even radical, vision of the office he holds. "Because I believe in the honor of it all," was his account of his ultimate motive for the 1988 campaign. In office that desire has evolved into the imperial half-presidency. Bush's idea of the presidency is akin to the French one, of a president who meets and knows heads of state while his designated premier attends to "mere housekeeping matters," as de Gaulle had put it. But the American system is not the French Fifth Republic. Bush is a president without a premier. The lowly housekeeping, the maid service, is consigned to the congressional Democrats, whose policies, when finally passed, are regularly vetoed.

In August one could see Bush's idea of the half-presidency in the ubiquity of Brent Scowcroft, his national security adviser, and in the virtual invisibility of Roger Porter, his domestic policy adviser, who forlornly pops up at irregular intervals to announce that, yes, there is a domestic policy. But Bush's notion of the presidency was perhaps most unself-consciously but openly on display in a minor incident that occurred at the start of his vacation.

Bush, as usual, was trying to curry favor with his right wing in order to co-opt it, a procedure analogous to a minority set-aside program. The Justice Department had joined a suit to overturn the injunction of a federal judge against anti-abortion demonstrations in Wichita. When reporters asked Bush about it, as he was teeing up on the golf course, he replied testily: "This isn't a matter for the president to be concerned about, especially on his first day of vacation." The use of the royal third person was not an isolated incident. When demonstrators turned up in Kennebunkport to protest his policy on AIDS, he objected that the demonstrators had disrupted life in Kennebunkport "because the president happened to be at his ancestral home."

Almost two decades of public education have laid the groundwork for Bush and his imperial half-presidency. Not only the Republican right but the interregnum Democratic president, Jimmy Carter, constantly indulged in rhetoric that claimed federal power could do little to resolve national problems. Beneath the conservative ideology now lies irresponsibility bred of political opportunism. The hard tasks are simply not attempted by the president, who in any case has no real plan; the alibi has by now become an article of faith, as if sanctioned by the separation of powers. And the

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drumbeat that domestic affairs are intractable has led much of the public into a mood of fatalism. In the cycle of lowered expectations, the conservative notion of government as incapable of offering remedy is perpetually reinforced. With this absolution, Bush has no complaint.

Bush's concept of the presidency plays perfectly to his strengths, or weaknesses; the role demands no strategic insight, but only that he be perceived as playing in the game of nations. Instead of defining his ends and then grappling with the insolvency of means in order to meet them, he flourishes his personal diplomacy. "It's way too early—way too early—to get into that," he explained authoritatively about his approach to the crumbling Soviet Union. The more reactive he is, the more his stature may actually be enhanced. Without more than a tactical sense of foreign policy, his uncertainty at any given moment can appear as the deep reflection of the professional: "Wouldn't be prudent."

In the meantime, by criticizing Bush for playing on the world stage, the Democrats grant him without contest his conceit as a master of foreign policy. Their insistence that he simply turn his back on it and cope solely with domestic problems is no real alternative (see "What Foreign Policy?" page 5). When Tom Harkin waves a suitcase with stickers of Bush's ports of call as if the president should never have left home, and when Doug Wilder echoes the isolationist slogan of the Republican right of the early 1940s—"America First"—they are in effect campaigning for Bush's notion of the presidency. They are not arguing with him, but complementing him; they are filling his vacuum and exposing their own. Their abdication does more than deprive them of a whole area in which to develop the message of change in a new era. Held to no standard but his own, his foreign policy unchallenged, Bush can present himself as the anchor, steadying and stabilizing. His inertia becomes reassuring.

The political problem with Bush's idea of the executive, however, may be that it is too aristocratic to campaign for plainly. With the coming campaign in mind, therefore, Bush has begun to proffer claims of good faith in handling domestic affairs. In the first planning session of his political advisers for the 1992 campaign, at ancestral Walker's Point, Bush's anxiety over his domestic weakness was mulled over. "Please, American people," he had already pleaded at a press conference, "do not listen to the charges by frantic Democrats who are trying to say we don't have a domestic policy."

Though his indifference has hitherto been palpable, his advisers suggested there was plenty of time to counter it. In the months ahead he would say that he has had a domestic program, but that the Democrats in Congress have hidden it from the people. This program would be the pastiche of marginal proposals that his departments have advanced, from education to the environment, but are made to appear as if they amounted to a coherent plan. He would also claim bipartisan compromises he's acceded to as his own bold strokes (e.g., the Clean Water Act). There isn't anything in particular he wants to do from now through 1996, except get re-elected; yet, by projection, it is his opponents who will be tarred as do-nothings. Bush will run ludicrously as the earnest reformer.

Integral to the plan is his exploitation of the tabloid mentality, becoming the host of "America's Most Wanted" and "Law and Order." The harbinger of this approach in 1992 (besides Willie Horton) came when Bush ventured out of his compound on August 14 to tell the Fraternal Order of Police gathered in convention in Pittsburgh that "the time has come to show less compassion for the architects of crime...." In 1988 Bush aroused dread at crime and the cold war. Now he will summon up dread over crime and the end of the cold war.

At his strategy meeting there was no stock-taking of the depletion of the intellectual capital of conservatism at the fall of communism. Nor was there any suggestion of a version of Eisenhower's Modern Republicanism, the now-forgotten effort in the 1950s to articulate a rationale for GOP centrism, of which Senator Prescott Bush had been an ardent promoter. Not once, according to a participant at Walker's Point, did President Bush draw a connection between anything proposed and a possible agenda for governing in his second term. His domestic program will be a list he's ordered up from his aides—administrative and political—to be able to say that he has one: an act combining Nixon's cynicism and Ford's vision. Modern Republicanism indeed.

At the center of the campaign, inevitably, will be the victory long ago—in Iraq. It will be used as more than the pinnacle of Bush's foreign policy; it will highlight the ersatz affect of the horseshoe-tossing patrician—the populist ringer. The synthesis of Bush's noblesse oblige with the war to produce the populist theme was accomplished early on, not by one of his political consultants, but by Randy Travis. In his hit song "Point of Light" he croons: "There are heroes whose names we never hear / A dedicated army of quiet volunteers." This country western song was introduced at a homecoming rally of the troops, where the president sat in a box waving a small flag in time to the music.

Bush's identification with the soldiers is the most evocative part of his Tory populism. The public, represented in uniform, assumes the dutiful, obedient virtues. The president tells us to be proud to be proud, to believe in belief, to have faith in faith, to resolve to have resolve. The power of positive thinking is a shield against a chaotic world. And 1992 becomes the khaki election.

Far more than any Democratic opponent he might face, Bush will control the character of the 1992 presidential campaign. So far there is no evidence that he is thinking about a serious program for his second term—one that takes into account the dramatic new realities. What he runs on will likely be as disposable as what he ran on in 1988. Nor has he shown any willing-

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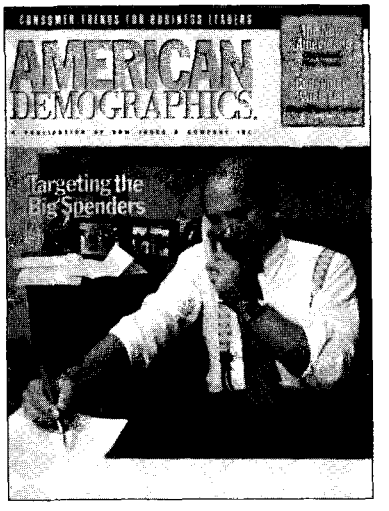

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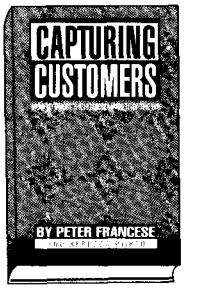

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ness to explain and win public approval for his actual vision of the presidency. Instead, he substitutes the powerful effects of the fabulous news from abroad, which, time and again, startled him before providing the lift to ever higher popularity. In the aftermath of an earthshaking revolution in which the American ideal of democracy has been a central factor, he plots a campaign that will be another symbolic combat of political gestures and formalisms. It is the only sort of campaign he seems to know how to wage. Once more into the vacuum. •

Larry Tribe's hopeless quest.

SUPREME COURTIER

By Jacob Weisberg

When Joe Biden, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, began interrogating Clarence Thomas last week, he arrived with ammunition provided by the leading liberal lights of legal scholarship: Walter Dellinger of Duke, Paul Gewirtz of Yale, Cass Sunstein of Chicago, and First Amendment lawyer Floyd Abrams, among others. But according to those involved, the éminence grise at the Judiciary Committee was Laurence H. Tribe, Tyler Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard. Tribe, who has advised Biden, Edward Kennedy, and other senators and their staffs on past nominations, helped prep the senators for an aggressive inquiry into Thomas's views on natural law. In the unlikely event that the Judiciary Democrats decide to oppose the nomination, arguments developed in consultation with Tribe will form the basis of their opposition.

Tribe, who at 49 can no longer be called the wunderkind of the Harvard law faculty, is no stranger to the process of advise and consent. The author of many volumes, including a widely used textbook on constitutional law, Tribe came to wide national prominence in the Robert Bork confirmation hearings in 1987. In private, Tribe served as chief coach to Biden, traveling to the senator's home in Wilmington, Delaware, to stand in for Bork in an all-day mock hearing, videotaped by Biden presidential campaign operatives. According to several accounts, Tribe played Bork better than the nominee himself. In public, Tribe served as the lead witness against the nomination, testifying for nearly three hours. Documenting nearly every instance in which Bork had backtracked from his previously stated positions, Tribe argued that the nominee was not just "outside the mainstream" on issues such as the right to privacy, free speech, and civil rights, but inconsistent as well. The professor devastatingly called Bork's "recasting" of his views "illusory" and a "confirmation conversion."

When Thomas was nominated, Tribe seemed to hanker for a return to the role he played in the Bork affair. Only the basis of his opposition was in doubt. Tribe's first reaction was that liberals would focus on Thomas's criticism of the Warren Court for "inventing new constitutional rights," as he told CNN on July 1. On further consideration, Tribe decided to argue from the traditionally conservative position of judicial restraint that Thomas was a potential activist who might invent new constitutional rights that would appeal to conservatives, such as a right to life for the unborn. In a July 15 *New York Times* op-ed piece, Tribe argued that natural law reasoning of the type Thomas employed in his writings was "troubling" because it has been used historically to "justify moralistic intrusions on personal choice." Going on to cite Thomas as the first nominee in fifty years to use natural law as a guide to the Constitution, Tribe ended with the claim that such views threatened "the fate of self-government in the U.S."

Tribe's article was itself something of a confirmation conversion. His own textbook cites Justice John Paul Stevens and retired Justice William Brennan as invoking natural rights to explain the reach of the liberty clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Worse, this anti-natural law position seems to contradict the core of Tribe's jurisprudence, which is to elaborate rights not explicitly spelled out in the Constitution. Moreover, it makes a mockery of Tribe's own opposition to Bork, which rested in part on Bork's original intent literalism, which Tribe asserted was based on the bad idea that the people did not retain natural rights beyond those specifically mentioned in the Bill of Rights. Michael McConnell, a law professor at Chicago, pointed out in a rejoinder in the *Times* that Tribe had attacked Bork for not recognizing that the purpose of the Bill of Rights was "to preserve natural rights." McConnell is not the only one to find Tribe's Thomas-induced argument against natural law hypocritical. In the words of Robert F. Nagel, a law professor at the University of Colorado, "Tribe has always teetered on the brink of seeming to be politically opportunistic. This time he crossed it."

A few days after the attack, Tribe was backtracking, arguing in a letter to the *Times* that he was not against natural rights per se, and maintaining that he was taking no position on the Thomas nomination before the hearings. It is hard to make sense of his rapidly evolving position, except to say that Tribe believes in natural rights when liberals use them, and opposes them when conservatives do. Asked whether he plans to testify against Thomas, Tribe says he hasn't been asked. Pressed, he adopts the lingo of the candidate's demurral, saying that he has "no current plans" to testify.

In the Thomas nomination, Tribe seems torn between his desire to weigh in decisively and his fear of goading conservatives who consider him the leader of the mob that "lynched" Robert Bork. Such opposition

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has hurt his intellectual reputation and damaged his chances of ever passing a Senate confirmation himself. In 1990 the right-wing law journal *Benchmark* devoted an entire issue to a pre-emptive strike against a future high court nomination for Tribe. The issue was filled with articles documenting Tribe's inconsistencies, judicial activism, and ambition. One piece parodied the title of Tribe's book *God Save This Honorable Court* as "God Save This Honorable Court—And My Place on It." The issue argued that Tribe has long nurtured a close relationship with Democratic politicians. Tribe's 1978 treatise on constitutional law is dedicated to Sargent Shriver. In 1984 he held fund-raisers for Gary Hart, and in 1988, after Biden dropped out of the race, he worked for Michael Dukakis. It is assumed by many people that if Kennedy, Biden, Hart, or Dukakis had ever been elected president, Tribe would have been a first choice for the Court.

In retrospect, Tribe minimizes his role in the Bork hearings. Though opposing Bork may have seemed a sound political calculation in the midst of the Iran-contra scandal, when Reaganism was in apparent eclipse and a Democratic presidency just around the corner, it looks very different from the perspective of what appears to be the middle of an eternal Republican reign. Tribe says he was reluctant to testify because he "expected him to be confirmed and knew I would be making a great many enemies including him." He adds that he was persuaded to testify by his teenage daughter, who told him to forget about the future and follow his strong feelings about Bork. He says he does not think his testimony was particularly influential. After Bork was voted down, Tribe sent him a personal note suggesting they kiss and make up.

But the most dramatic way Tribe tried to neutralize his role was by loudly touting the next nominee, Anthony Kennedy. "It seems to be indisputable that Judge Kennedy's very considerable intellectual strengths are coupled with a deep and abiding commitment to basic constitutional values and principles," Tribe said. The subtext of his testimony was that Tribe was not a reflexive opponent of Republican nominees. Since his confirmation, Kennedy has voted as conservatively as any member of the Court. "I think I was overly optimistic," Tribe now says.

Tribe's tendency to position himself politically at the expense of intellectual consistency was demonstrated even more clearly in the 1989 flag-burning controversy. After the Supreme Court threw out an anti-flag-burning law in *Texas* v. *Johnson*, President Bush promoted the idea of a constitutional amendment, and Democrats began to scramble. A few, like Bob Kerrey and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, took the brave stand that flag burning was protected by the First Amendment. Biden, however, proposed a new statute to make defacing a flag a crime. Tribe helped him draft the law, advising him to use language that the court could judge "content-neutral," meaning that it proscribes an activity without punishing the ideas that activity might express. Again Tribe appeared before the Judiciary Committee as a witness, saying he believed such a law could pass constitutional muster. This contradicted the view in his constitutional law text that it is impossible under the First Amendment to protect the flag as a symbol without suppressing the views of flag desecrators. Tribe's original view was vindicated, and his Judiciary testimony discredited, when the Supreme Court threw out the Senate statute.

Some Tribe defenders suggest his contradictions are the result of his training in advocacy. Lawyers don't have to worry about squaring the arguments they make from case to case; they just argue each case as hard as they can. Tribe, says a former student, "seems to forget the prior positions he argued with equal vehemence." This would be OK if Tribe were content with merely backing liberal political positions. Instead, he casts himself as a scholar with fixed opinions on the meaning of the Constitution. "He wants a lot of different roles," says the student. "The disinterested witness, the passionate advocate, and the insider." Sometimes the roles get tangled up.

The conventional explanation of Tribe's frenetic activism is that he is desperately trying to get on the Supreme Court. Although his ambitions in that regard are hardly a secret—and hardly objectionable—Tribe says that his decisions have not been hedged by ambition. He says that if his sole goal were a seat on the Court, he shouldn't have testified against Bork. He says he is troubled by the "relative spinelessness" of colleagues who have strong views but decline to testify in such cases. "It is ridiculous to plan a life around the remote prospect of one day being named a Supreme Court justice," he says. "I don't dwell on the degree to which I may or may not have dimmed those prospects."

Tribe almost had me convinced until he called back from his car phone to give more examples of things he never would have done if he were someone who thought about advancing his own career. He said that arguing the losing side in *Bowers* v. *Hardwick*, the Georgia sodomy case, was a bad strategic move, since conservatives would surely object to a nominee who had defended the right of gay people to have sex with each other. Several of Tribe's defenders also put forth this example. But it's hard to imagine a Democratic president appointing a nominee who couldn't find a constitutional defense for consensual sex among adults, as four members of the Burger Court managed in 1986. If Tribe weren't so concerned with making it to the Court, maybe he wouldn't be so concerned with proving he isn't.

A likelier interpretation is that Tribe unwittingly hurt his chances by speaking his mind in the Bork hearings and has been desperately trying to restore them ever since. It's a sad spectacle, since barring a sudden change in the political weather, his frantic positioning won't bring him any closer to the black robe he covets. The poignancy is that Larry Tribe seems to be the only one who doesn't realize his prayers will never be answered. •

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THE MINORITY MINORITY

By Fred Barnes

Last July Clarence Thomas attended a private dinner in Washington with a handful of NAACP officials. This was shortly after he'd been nominated to the Supreme Court, and Thomas hoped to soften the antipathy of the black civil rights establishment toward him. Not a chance. He was soon trashed in public statements as a snake, a black copy of David Duke, "Bork in blackface," and putty in the hands of his conservative white wife.

Gary Franks, the first black Republican elected to the House of Representatives since 1932, got better treatment, but not much. He insisted on joining the Congressional Black Caucus when he arrived on Capitol Hill last January. At the first meeting, Franks says, he was told, "Gary, you're not really black." At least Franks is allowed to go to meetings, though he was banished during strategy sessions for the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which he opposes. Michael Williams, the assistant secretary of education for civil rights, has been totally ostracized by black leaders since he proposed last December to ban race-specific college scholarships for blacks. Thomas had helped persuade Williams to take the job, which Thomas held in 1981 and 1982. "Develop some relationship with the traditional civil rights community," Thomas advised. Williams tried, but black leaders won't "even get on the phone and talk," he says.

Black conservatives explain this superhostility simply: they're a threat. For the first time in decades, their challenge to one-party rule in the black community by civil rights leaders and elected officials has resonance. No, black conservatives aren't on the verge of ousting the traditional political leadership. That's a distant goal. And no, their ideas aren't extinguishing the liberalism of the black elite. But "something really has happened," says Shelby Steele, author of *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*, which argued that blacks should chiefly rely on their own resources and not on racial preferences to get ahead. "There's been an evolution in black thinking. We had a one-party system for twenty, twenty-five years, and it just wasn't working." Now black conservatives have broken the sound barrier. They're being heard, so much so that they've destroyed the myth that black thinking is monolithic and invariably matches whatever Jesse Jackson, the Black Caucus, or NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Hooks espouses.

The nomination of Thomas, who scorns the civil rights agenda and urges black self-help, has a lot to do with this. "It makes us visible," says Elizabeth Wright, who publishes a newsletter of black conservative opinion called "Issues and Views." "It makes us credible." It has also brought black conservatives enormous media attention, much of it favorable. Steele was pictured holding his retriever Sunny in a four-page spread in *People* last August. The Thomas nomination is "a watershed in black American leadership," adds black TV journalist Tony Brown, who hosts "Tony Brown's Journal" on PBS. "It has forced black people to re-examine their direction." It prompted Brown to jump ostentatiously to the Republican Party. He wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that "a surprising number of blacks have told me they will follow my example."

Maybe they will, but there's room for skepticism. There was a similar flurry of interest in black conservatism ten years ago, and little came of it. Blacks gathered then at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco to zing the civil rights establishment, denounce affirmative action, and advocate black self-reliance. An organization of black conservatives, the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, was formed. It soon petered out. And serving in the Reagan administration proved to be an unsatisfactory experience for some black conservatives, who felt they were treated like exhibits and undercut by Reagan's record on civil rights. In 1988 Clarence Pendleton, the black chairman of the Civil Rights Commission, died. After the funeral Ricky Silberman, vice chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, joined Thomas and black economist Thomas Sowell for coffee. "I couldn't help thinking how bereft and lonely they were," says Silberman. They seemed like the only black conservatives left in America.

They weren't. A critical mass of conservatives (they're still a small minority of black political activists) was forming. What was missing ten years ago were black conservatives with experience, credentials, and clout. That's what they acquired during the 1980s. "The Clarence Thomas of 1981 is not the Clarence Thomas of today," says Alan Keyes. "He's been in government, he's dealt with problems, and his conclusions aren't just theory anymore." In short, Thomas is now fully credentialed. So is Keyes, who heads Citizens Against Govern-

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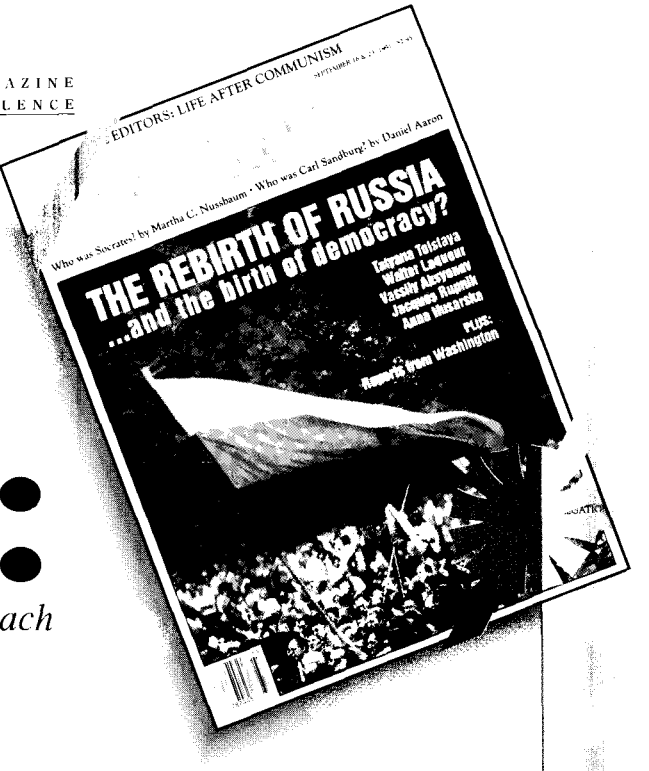

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ment Waste. He was assistant secretary of state for international organizations, then ran as a Republican against Democratic Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland in 1988. (Keyes got 38 percent of the vote.) He's likely to run again in 1992, this time against Democratic Senator Barbara Mikulski. Williams embellished his résumé by prosecuting neo-Nazis and Klansmen for the Justice Department. Kay James was spokeswoman for the National Right to Life Committee before becoming an assistant secretary of health and human services. Franks served three terms on the city council of Waterbury, Connecticut. Robert Woodson started the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, which promotes self-help programs, and in 1990 got a $320,000 "genius" grant from the MacArthur Foundation. Steele, Sowell, Brown, economist Walter Williams, Boston University professor Glenn Loury, and others turned out a number of conservative columns, articles, and books.

A funny thing happened when George Bush became president: black conservatives flourished beyond their wildest dreams. This is ironic because Bush is pals with establishment blacks of the type that traditionally get jobs or contracts in GOP administrations. They're moderates or liberals, if ideological at all. The only one of them who got a major job from Bush was Arthur Fletcher, the chairman of the Civil Rights Commission, who has recently claimed to find rampant racism in one of the nation's least racist institutions, the military. Black conservatives got substantive appointments, not token posts. In 1990 Thomas finished a narrow second to David Souter for Bush's first Supreme Court nomination, and this year Bush never seriously considered anyone but Thomas. Bush appointed General Colin Powell, a conservative on foreign and defense issues, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. His choice for secretary of health and human services, Louis Sullivan, proved to be conservative on the two chief issues of his department, health care and abortion. (The influence of his neocon deputy secretary, Constance Horner, had something to do with this.) Michael Williams became an assistant secretary of education, and J. Kenneth Blackwell an assistant secretary of housing and urban development under Jack Kemp. And so on. When Joseph Watkins, who is non-ideological, left in August as White House liaison to blacks, he was replaced by Claudia Butts. She came directly from the Heritage Foundation. "I'm adamant that I'm a black conservative," she says. "I want to say it loud and clear that it's OK to be a conservative.... Now is the safest time ever [for black conservatives] to come out of the closet."

The partial embrace of black conservatism by renegade intellectuals has strengthened its legitimacy all the more. The latest is Stephen L. Carter, a professor at Yale Law School and author of *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*. "I get really annoyed when I get included in these stories about black conservatives," he says. (Sorry, Steve.) "I have trouble with this notion of a black conservative." If a black "criticizes some aspect, however small, of the civil rights agenda," he is called a conservative. "Black people alone are labeled on this very small spectrum." Carter is right about that. Nonetheless he takes up three themes of black conservatives in his book: racial preferences should be phased out, blacks should nurture their own excellence instead of leaning excessively on society for aid, and black leaders should quit punishing conservatives and enforcing conformity. He makes a compelling case for them. Carter sometimes sounds like a conservative, even if he isn't one.

Carter skewers the current justification for affirmative action, that it provides diversity in the academic or professional world. This rationale assumes that middle-class blacks are "black the right way" and willing always to speak on behalf of less fortunate blacks. But blacks often have "views that are ... well, not what black people are supposed to say," Carter writes. So "race as a proxy for views" fails "unless one supposes that biology implies ideology." He echoes Clarence Thomas in advising blacks how to prove they've succeeded by their own wits. We should, he says, "commit ourselves to battle for excellence, to show ourselves able to meet any standard, to pass any test that looms before us, in short, to form ourselves into a vanguard of black professionals who are simply too good to ignore." By the way, Carter says the ranks of black dissenters like himself are "swelling."

Steele, who teaches English at San Jose State, is less deferential to black leaders and more sweeping in his indictment of affirmative action than Carter. And he's not squeamish about being labeled a conservative, though he calls himself "a classical Jeffersonian liberal." In *The Content of Our Character*, he writes favorably of President Reagan ("Even his deemphasis of race was reasonable in a society where race only divides") and faults the "one-sided approach that the civil rights establishment has taken toward black problems." This approach explains its opposition to Thomas, Steele believes. He endorses Thomas for the Supreme Court. (Carter is uncommitted.) "Over the past few years, I have had warm conversations with Thomas over the phone," he wrote in *The Los Angeles Times*. Steele noted the "crucial difference between the experience of suffering and an identity focused on the suffering." Thomas's life reflects this difference. "Though Thomas in no way denies his own suffering from poverty and discrimination, his entire life has been a struggle not to identify with it—and, therefore, not to be defeated by it," Steele wrote. Civil rights leaders insist that blacks seek redress from society. In this way, today's black suffering only re-enacts yesterday's inferiority," he said. "The irony is that once we identify with our suffering, we lose the power to end it."

Critic Stanley Crouch and Tony Brown, neither of them conservative, are withering in their attacks on black leaders. Crouch concentrates on the black power posturing of Al Sharpton, Spike Lee, Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, etc. He writes in *Notes of a Hanging Judge* that they "helped send not only black America but this nation into a tailspin on

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Black and Right

Frederick Douglass remarked that "the Republican Party is the deck, all else is the sea." It was the Republican Party, after all, that had been organized in 1854 to prevent the extension of slavery. It was Abraham Lincoln, a Republican president, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation. And it was the Radical Republicans during Reconstruction who issued the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, outlawing slavery and granting citizenship and voting rights to blacks. Based on this history, and the fact that Republicans captured nearly all of the national black vote until 1936 (when the fruits of the New Deal were beginning to be realized), it may at first seem odd that no Republican presidential candidate has received more than 15 percent of the national black vote since Richard Nixon received 35 percent in 1960.

But the GOP's abandonment of the black vote was forecast by Barry Goldwater as early as 1961: "We're not going to get the Negro vote as a bloc in 1964 or 1968, so we ought to go hunting where the ducks are." The ducks were found in the South—whites disillusioned with Lyndon Johnson's embrace of civil rights liberalism. Blacks were considered inconsequential to the primary goal. "Obviously, the GOP can build a winning coalition without Negro votes," prophesied Kevin Phillips in 1969 in *The Emerging Republican Majority.*

The "Southern strategy" has been used by every Republican presidential candidate since 1964 and will no doubt be used in 1992. The result has been a boon for the GOP in presidential elections. (Though the same can't be said for the House and Senate. If Republican Senate candidates had gotten just 20 percent of the black vote in 1986, for example, they would have maintained their majority.) In terms of the black/GOP relationship, however, the "Southern strategy" would very likely find Frederick Douglass casting Republicans out to sea.

Now the Republican Party has decided it wants blacks back on board. Lee Atwater, upon becoming party chairman in 1989, declared in *The New York Times* that "making blacks voters welcome in the Republican Party is my pre-eminent goal." So Atwater created the Outreach division of the RNC. One of its main tasks was candidate recruitment. It was believed that black voters would need to see black Republican elected officials to convince them to switch parties. The necessity of such an effort was clear: just 76 of the 7,300 black elected officials in the country are Republicans, and in state legislatures, the main breeding ground for higher office, only three of the 439 blacks are Republicans.

The recruitment itself was largely successful: three black Republicans ran for winnable seats in 1990, and Gary Franks from Connecticut became the first black Republican to serve in the House since Oscar DePriest of Chicago departed in 1935. (Ed Brooke, a liberal Republican, represented Massachusetts in the Senate from 1966 to 1978.) Outreach, however, was unable to increase significantly the Republican black vote. Apparently it would take more than a few new elected black officials to bring black voters back to the GOP.

Yet Republicans responded with more of the same. Last March, as part of an RNC reorganization, Outreach was subsumed under the newly created Office of Political Coalitions, which also reaches out to Hispanics, Asians, Eastern Europeans, labor, and the disabled. RNC Communications Director B. J. Cooper explains that attention to the needs of black voters had been "institutionalized within the RNC" and that now they would receive increased day-to-day attention.

Although Cooper says recruitment efforts have not decreased, the mainspring of the GOP's black strategy seems to have become consumed by focus group reports produced by the Nathan Group, a black-owned polling firm in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A confidential report issued to the RNC in March 1989 recommended, among other things, that President Bush "meet with the congressional Black Caucus, for the sole purposes of listening, and showing his sensitivity to black issues and rapport." Bush met with the CBC on May 23, 1989. Nathan issued another confidential report to the RNC this past February, which reiterated the recommendation that the president meet with the CBC. On June 25 Bush did just that. The February report also recommended that Bush attend "significant black events, such as speaking at major black institutions like Hampton University." On May 12 Bush delivered the commencement address at (surprise) Hampton University.

Nathan's overall approach rests on what its February report describes as "a tenacious plan that provides RESPECT and RECOGNITION to black Americans. The RNC must look for every opportunity to say to black Americans, you are 'somebody to the Republican Party.' " Bush attempts to pursue this by consistently attending "black" events (forty in 1989 alone) and meeting frequently with black leadership groups such as the NAACP and the Urban League.

To some extent this strategy seems to have paid off: Bush received just 12 percent of the national black vote in 1988 and opposed the Democrat-sponsored civil rights acts of 1990 and 1991, yet an August ABC News/*Washington Post* poll found 46 percent of nonwhites approved his handling of the presidency. In March, just after the war, the figure was 77 percent.

No one's predicting, however, that these approval ratings will translate into a significant number of votes. The modern-day GOP has scored some minor successes in recruiting black candidates—and the Thomas nomination may provide for the first time a platform for black conservative ideas. But Republicans have still failed to articulate to blacks more fully *why* it's a better home for them than the Democratic Party.

MATTHEW REES

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the subjects of race, of culture, of heritage." When Brown joined the GOP, he said that black leaders "perpetuate an intellectual fascism and foster a totalitarian environment in which any independent-thinking black who breaks lockstep with their often self-serving Democratic worldview is severely condemned." Worse, they've tied blacks to the "something-for-nothing entitlement dogma of the Democrats." Poverty, not racism, is the chief problem facing blacks, according to Brown. What's needed is self-help, not more government handouts. Brown is an enthusiastic supporter of Thomas.

Winning confirmation of Thomas would top the agenda of black conservatives, if they had one. "Aren't all Americans flattered by his example?" Steele asked in *The Los Angeles Times*. Black conservatives have no explicit program, but there are a half-dozen ideas that most conservatives and their allies harp on. One is that civil rights leaders and elected officials have tragically failed the black community. Robert Woodson says he dropped out of the civil rights movement in the late 1970s when he discovered it wasn't helping poor blacks. As an Urban League official from 1971 to 1977, "We did a lot in the name of poor people, but the true beneficiaries were middle- and upper-income people, primarily blacks." Wright blames the NAACP, Operation PUSH, the Urban League, and other "race organizations" for making blacks economically dependent. "There is probably nothing that can undo the generations of damage done by all these organizations that have not only discouraged blacks from taking economic initiatives among ourselves, but have made a virtue of constructing excuses for our failures to do so," she wrote in her newsletter last April.

Black conservatives have their own perspective on racial preferences, opposing them not so much because they are unfair or produce economic inefficiency, but because they are bad for blacks. Steele says preferences are an "escapist racial policy" that leads to "dependency on entitlements rather than our own initiative." Walter Williams, who teaches at George Mason University in Virginia, says affirmative action guarantees blacks will stumble in college. Blacks scoring in the top 10 percent to 15 percent of students on the SATs are recruited by elite colleges where most students are in the top 1 percent to 5 percent. "You create failures out of students who could be successes at lesser-known schools," he argues. Butts says preferences wrongly signal blacks that "genuine opportunity is not really there for black people."

The bedrock idea of black conservatives is self-help. It's an old idea among blacks, pushed relentlessly a century ago by Booker T. Washington, and has its roots in the "free-labor" movement (see "Douglass to Thomas" by Stephen Macedo, page 23). More recently, Sowell has argued a historical case for self-reliance. In several books he points out that immigrant groups that relied on themselves (Jews, Japanese) prospered rapidly while those who looked to the political system for help (blacks) didn't. I've yet to find a black conservative who hasn't read Sowell avidly. "He makes so much sense," says Wright. Black leaders, says Steele, "put such a singular emphasis on redress for past victimization as the primary source of power for black Americans, they see self-help as anathema to that. I don't. The two can coexist." Loury says that "at the base of much poverty in the ghetto lie the values and behavior of some inner-city residents and those, with concerted effort, can be changed for the better. History and common sense show that government is not the best instrument for effecting the transformation of these values."

Black conservatives have a relatively benign view of racism in America. "I don't see any Bull Connor around," says Horace Cooper, a legislative aide to GOP Representative Richard Armey of Texas. Stephen Carter, though not a conservative, writes that "racism is no longer the all-encompassing force it once was." Steele sees "a marked decline in racism." There are "new opportunities," but blacks have an "aversion" to grasping them, he adds. As a student of Allan Bloom at Cornell in 1969, Keyes refused to join a black protest, was threatened, quit school, and later transferred to Harvard (where his roommate was William Kristol, now Vice President Quayle's chief of staff). The experience made Keyes a conservative angry with anti-American protesters. "I came to the conclusion," he says, "that there was something basically correct about the American system."

But black conservatives think something has gone terribly wrong in the black community in the years since the civil rights victories of the 1950s and 1960s. "Things began to escalate in the 1970s in terms of criminality among blacks and illegitimacy," says Wright. Then came the drug epidemic, the decline of the black family, trouble in the schools, the deterioration of inner cities. But black leaders pursued the same civil rights agenda, she says, all but ignoring the economic and moral crisis of poor blacks. They championed "some black corporation executive who wants to be CEO. I should be worried about the glass ceiling he won't break through?" One final thing. Black conservatives believe a majority of blacks agree with them on most issues.

Despite areas of agreement, black conservatives haven't congealed as a full-fledged movement. "What unifies us is our sense that we need more in the black community than redress," says Steele. What more exactly? They disagree on that. Walter Williams is a libertarian who wants minimalist government, arguing that regulations and licensing requirements restrict poor blacks from starting businesses. Keyes wants a moral crusade in the black community, including a "marriage bonus" for folks on welfare who get and stay married and vouchers that may be used at church-run schools, drug rehab clinics, and day-care centers. Kay James, now executive vice president of the One to One Foundation, is eager to get along with civil rights groups. "We're all working toward the same goal," she says, citing "access to jobs and education [and] freedom to send our kids to school where we want." Woodson spurns these groups but promotes tenant ownership

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of public housing and self-help programs of neighborhood organizations, churches, and social groups.

Black conservatives tend to be loners, contrarians, or prickly non-conformists. Their lives aren't easy. They've been isolated by black leaders, and their relations with white conservatives are bumpy. Thomas confessed in 1987 that whereas liberals think blacks shouldn't be conservative, his colleagues in the Reagan administration thought blacks "could not be conservative." Keyes got into a heated dispute at a Georgetown restaurant with Kemp over whether economic incentives are enough to lift the black poor. Kemp said yes. "Economic opportunity is great," Keyes answered, "but people have to be prepared to take advantage of it." In 1990 Butts convinced her family in North Carolina to vote for Senator Jesse Helms—until Helms ran a TV ad denouncing racial quotas that blacks saw as a pitch for white racist votes. All her persuading went "right out the window," says Butts. "I don't dare bring up that discussion again." As an aide at the Reagan White House, Bill Keyes (no relation to Alan) pleaded in vain for the president to stress issues like voluntary school prayer that appeal to blacks. He later quit politics in frustration to sell insurance. Black conservatives "are such individuals, so different in many ways, all from different professions," says Steele. "It's not a club," says Michael Williams. "We don't meet. Maybe we should."

Meanwhile, though, black conservatives are hot. Michael Williams, who's from Midland, Texas, and is a chum of President Bush's son George, thinks they should capitalize on this and hit the road to market conservatism. "We've been theorists. Now we've got to get on the stump and sell ideas." There may not be enough prominent black conservatives to go around. Franks has been flooded with an extraordinary number of speech requests for a House freshman. He's accepted only 5 percent of them. Franks says the media must pay attention to black conservatives now that they've got a voice at every level of national government—the Supreme Court (Thomas, assuming he's confirmed), the administration (Sullivan, etc.), and Congress (himself). "People can't just talk to Jesse Jackson, Ron Dellums, and Carl Rowan. They'll talk to Walter Williams, myself, and others. It could really change the dynamics of the debate on issues affecting the black community." It already has. •

The roots of black conservatism.

DOUGLASS TO THOMAS

By Stephen Macedo

The nomination of Clarence Thomas, a black conservative, will be seen by many as a Republican way of adding insult to injury on race policy. As a black opposed to busing and affirmative action, many civil rights leaders say, Thomas lends respectability to policies that ignore the brutal legacy of centuries of slavery and government-enforced apartheid. Through his anomalous personal success Thomas gives credence to self-centered, uncaring conservatives whose idea of a social policy is to wag their fingers at the disadvantaged for their poor characters. The Thomas nomination is bound to look, from the left, like the ultimate bit of cynicism: a hopeless, perhaps phony, effort to convince black people that Republicans really do have their interests at heart.

He is certainly an anomaly. The largely negative role played by Republicans on race since the early 1960s has made black Republicans a beleaguered species. But it has not always been so. There is a tradition, long in eclipse, that helps make sense of Thomas and today's emergent black Republicanism. Indeed, Thomas recalls the early days of the Republican Party and an important part of the American political culture. The key to what he stands for—and could stand for—is best located in his own frequent references to natural law, the Declaration of Independence, Abraham Lincoln, and the first great black Republican, Frederick Douglass. If conservatives want to contribute to the advancement of black Americans, it is to this tradition that they should find recourse. If there is a Republican high road on the matter of race—and it's still debatable—this tradition may point the way.

Thomas's frequent recurrence to the first principles of political morality recalls a Lincolnian constitutional perspective that Frederick Douglass also came largely to embrace. Lincoln's great aim was to preserve the Union while construing the Constitution as a moral project committed to human equality. Though not an aboli-

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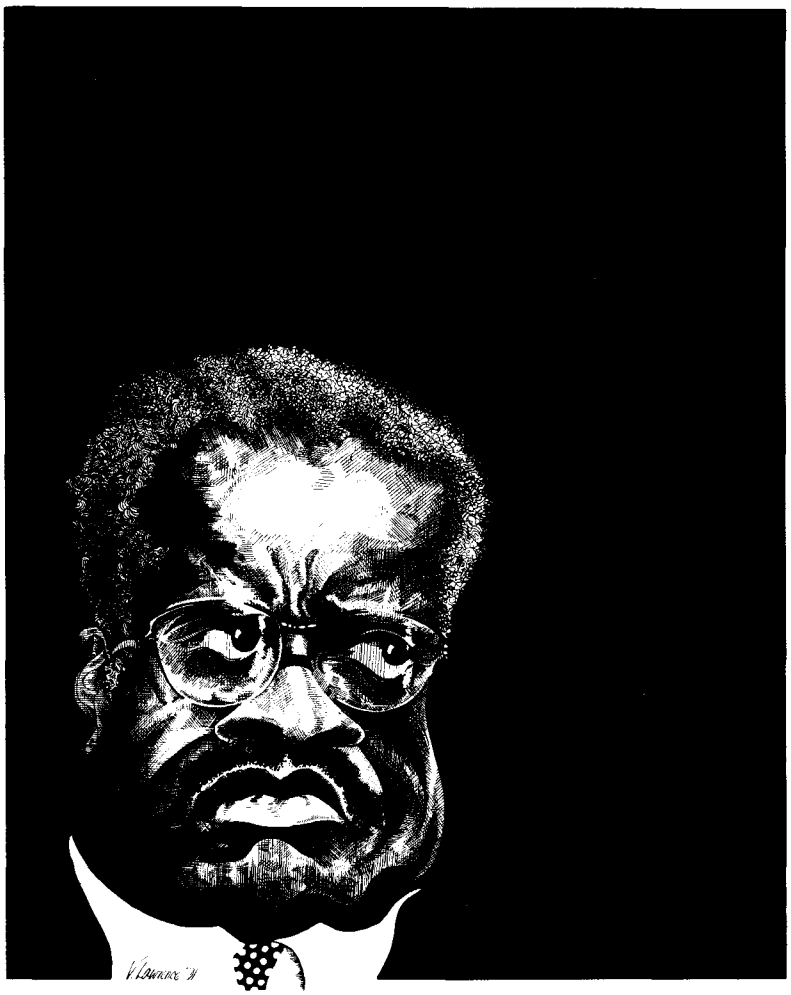
tionist, he sought to confine slavery to the states where it already existed and thus to keep its monstrosity before the public eye.

Lincoln had to contend not only with slaveholders and other racists, but with Garrisonian abolitionists who called the Constitution a "compact with Hell," on account of the protections it extended to slaveholding. He also confronted a Supreme Court that had recently held, in its infamous *Dred Scott* decision, that the Founders never meant to include blacks among the persons protected by the Declaration or the Constitution. However, Lincoln insisted on the universality of the first principles contained in the Declaration. He adhered to the simple truth that when the Founders said that "all Men are created equal," they meant it. Blacks too owned themselves and had a natural right to the fruits of their own labor, and so blacks and whites shared a basic moral identity by nature.



CLARENCE THOMAS BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

By 1851 Douglass had, like Lincoln, come to accept the basic rightness of the Constitution. Later he was maddened by Lincoln's reluctance to turn the war into an assault on slavery itself. Nevertheless he contributed powerfully to the notion that blacks could be supportive of the American system, and hopeful about their place in it: "The Constitution, as well as the Declaration of Independence, and the sentiments of the Founders of the Republic," he declared in a speech on the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857, "give us a platform broad enough, and strong enough, to support the most comprehensive plans for the freedom and elevation of all the people of this country, without regard to color, class, or clime."

In Clarence Thomas's emphasis on natural law and the principles of the Declaration, he too insists that America stands for a moral project that includes blacks as much as whites. He insists that the morality of individualism that underlies the Constitution applies to all, and provides opportunities for all. But he also asserts that full inclusion requires efforts that may be at odds with the ethos of affirmative action and the implicit teaching of many welfare state programs. This constitutes the heart of the controversy over Thomas and conservative blacks in general. How can conservatives opposed to policies designed to help the disadvantaged claim to have the interests of blacks at heart? Here again black conservatives echo arguments advanced by the first Republicans.

Lincoln was painfully aware of the immense difficulties of achieving racial harmony in America—indeed, he long thought the difficulties insuperable. Though holding to the universality of the Declaration, he frequently professed doubts that blacks and whites could live together peacefully. Racial prejudice was too deep, and the legacy of slavery and war would leave permanent bitterness.

Douglass, however, glimpsed the possibility of a fuller black inclusion into American society if only blacks were allowed to prove their capacity to elevate themselves and contribute to the public good. The war itself provided a vehicle of inclusion: black enlistment in the military. "Give them a chance," he declared in a speech in February 1863, "stop calling them 'niggers,' and call them soldiers. Give them a chance to seek the bauble reputation at the cannon's mouth." By sharing in the fight, blacks would help overcome the prejudice of whites and the self-doubt born of slavery. They would recover their own self-respect and earn the right to American citizenship. By the end of the war Lincoln seems to have been coming around to a similar view. (See "Lincoln and Douglass" by Dorothy Wickenden, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1990.) The Emancipation Proclamation contained a provision for incorporating blacks into the Union Army. And in a letter to the first free-state governor of Louisiana in 1864, Lincoln suggested extending citizenship to some blacks, "especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks."

Compare all of this to Thomas's opposition to affirmative action. He avoids the mistaken argument, made by many Republicans, that affirmative action is simply discrimination in reverse (as if affirmative action were

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based on the idea that whites are inferior or second-class citizens). Instead he typically argues that affirmative action undermines the moral resources that blacks need in order to earn their way into the American mainstream. Thomas's concern, expressed repeatedly and with eloquence, is that group-based preferences encourage blacks to look to government largess rather than to self-help and individual initiative.

Indeed, for Thomas, integration itself has been a mixed blessing: he suggests that it helped put many black enterprises out of business, and so undermined the initiative and self-reliance of black communities. And much recent social policy, he says, has been more of a burden than a benefit. Welfare teaches dependency and busing assumes that all-black schools are necessarily inferior. Though agreeing with the result in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (which overturned the constitutionality of "separate but equal" public schools), he argues that the Court based its reasoning on the notion that black self-esteem and achievement necessarily suffer without the presence of white students. (See "A Question of Fairness" by Juan Williams, *The Atlantic*, February 1987.) All of these policies and programs, Thomas seems to insist, represent losses as well as gains. A principle of dependency is nurtured in all of these programs designed to help blacks: a teaching that blacks are disabled, maimed, incapable of doing for themselves.

Thomas and other black conservatives such as Glenn Loury, Shelby Steele, and Thomas Sowell worry that with these government programs blacks have assumed the mantle of victimhood, with its attendant temptations. These programs brought the rise of a civil rights lobby whose livelihood depends on spawning programs and fostering a taste for them. In a remarkable commencement address at Savannah State College in 1985, Thomas warned of "wallowing in excuses," and being "lured by sirens and purveyors of misery who profit from constantly regurgitating all that is wrong with black Americans and blaming these problems on others."

The core feature of Thomas's position is its insistence on the reality and redemptive potential of black pride. Past generations of blacks, he said at Savannah, "knew all too well that they were held back by prejudice. But they weren't pinned down by it." This emphasis on the necessity of self-help, and the denial of a government route to dignity, helps explain Thomas's sympathy with aspects of Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan: blacks have been victimized, but at base they are not victims. According to Juan Williams, Thomas quotes these words of Malcolm X from memory:

> The American black man should be focusing his every effort toward building his own businesses and decent homes for himself. As other ethnic groups have done, let the black people, wherever possible, patronize their own kind, hire their own kind, and start in those ways to build up the black race's ability to do for itself. That's the only way the American black man is ever going to get respect.

The Malcolm X that Thomas invokes is a Black Power version of Horatio Alger. "I don't see how the civil rights people today can claim Malcolm X as one of their own," he told Williams. "Where does he say black people should go begging to the Labor Department for jobs? He was hell on integrationists. Where does he say you should sacrifice your institutions to be next to white people?"

Thomas's argument against affirmative action and the governmental path to equality is based on the judgment that equal standing as a citizen comes from individual effort; that dignity and pride of citizenship in America cannot be conferred politically by affirmative action; that all immigrant groups—from Irish Catholics, to Jews, to Asians—have suffered discrimination and progressed through dint of effort (as Sowell has long argued); that the new path charted for blacks by civil rights leaders and liberals is an experiment that is not working; and that blacks can only make real progress the old-fashioned way—they have got to earn it.

In this regard, Thomas belongs to what political theorist Judith N. Shklar in *American Citizenship* calls the "party of individual effort." That party, even older and broader than the Republican Party, has roots in the activist maxims of *Poor Richard's Almanac*, in Jacksonian suspicion of government licenses and monopolies, and in confident Emersonian self-reliance. The government, according to this view, should enforce the rules of fair play, ensure that every child gets a basic education, and then leave individuals to succeed or not on their own. It was given added acuity by the contrast of free laborers with the dependent plight of slaves: unfree, oppressed, and unable to claim a right to the fruits of their labor.

Long before Clarence Thomas, Frederick Douglass linked the cause of black Americans to this party:

> All that any man has a right to expect, ask, give or receive in this world, is fair play. When society has secured this to its members, and the humblest citizen of the republic is put into the undisturbed possession of the natural fruits of his own exertions, there is really very little left for society and government to do.

Through the "free labor" movement this notion helped spawn the Republican Party, even if the GOP has sometimes forgotten it.

In today's Republican Party, it may represent the best hope for a reversal of the last twenty-five years of thinly veiled cynicism and bigotry. The party of individual effort labors, however, under another irony. Many of its proponents are themselves indebted to the government programs they describe as a softer form of the old slavery. Thomas, like many other black conservatives, was himself a beneficiary of affirmative action. His very nomination is related to the fact that he is black. The question to be asked of him, and of other black conservatives, is how they would address this apparent contradiction. Is government aid always as debilitating as the party of individual effort sometimes implies? Granting that poverty and dependency oppress the poor as slavery oppressed their forebears, the challenge now is to show that reducing government interference with individual liberty is the key to lifting these burdens. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Smothers Brothers

Those arty nuisances, Joel and Ethan Coen, are back. The first directs, the second produces, together they write, and together they have strewn the cinema landscape with the pretentious *Blood Simple* and *Miller's Crossing*, plus a herniated farce called *Raising Arizona*. Their latest, **Barton Fink** (20th Century-Fox), is billed as a comedy, but it could also be billed as a drama, a satire, an allegory, or a film (partially) noir. It wouldn't matter, or help.

The license taken with credibility in the script is so extreme that we are meant to be cowed into acceptance. This film is so poetic, the Coens imply, so unusual, that only a dull literalist would carp. But as *Barton Fink* seems to me only gaseous fraudulence, I'll carp.

The time is 1941. (The Coens chose the date for a reason that backfires on them. See below.) Barton Fink is a New York playwright, patently modeled on Clifford Odets, who has a Broadway success, signs with Capitol Pictures, ensconces himself in a seedy L.A. hotel to prove he still has a social conscience, and proceeds to have trouble writing the movie about wrestling to which he is assigned. He becomes friendly with a hulking insurance salesman in the hotel room next door, also with another Capitol writer, a famous and sodden Southern novelist (guess who it's supposed to be), and his amanuensis-lover.

After fruitless days of struggle to get started on his script, Fink is liberated by a severe shock, writes a screenplay at white heat, and gets it rejected at white heat. All through the film he has been haunted by a color photo of a girl in a bathing suit on his dingy bedroom wall; at the end he meets such a girl. With this last meaningless symbolical nudge, the film ends.

Look first at the Coens' historical sense. They chose 1941 because Fink's play, of which we hear a few lines at the start, is pastiche Odets. The theater is the Belasco, where *Awake and Sing* had its premiere. But the proletarian sentiments given to Fink personally—theater for the masses, and so on—were several important years out of date by 1941. Fink's ideas are all Deep-Depression talk. (*Awake and Sing* appeared in February 1935.) By 1941 Odets and his fellows were mostly talking about the struggle against fascism in the war that was then raging. Later, in a fracas at a USO dance in Hollywood, Fink calls the soldiers and sailors "monsters." This is ridiculous: no one like Fink would have used that word at that time about those who were potential fighters against fascism.

Then there's the satire of Hollywood. After the towering tons of such satire, how does anyone have the energy, let alone the nerve, to satirize Tinseltown yet again? The producer (echoes of Louis B. Mayer) is a cagey brute full of overpraise, suspicion, vulgarity, transparent wiliness. So what else is old? The stooges around him are die-stamped, the studio atmosphere is recycled Fitzgerald.

Then there's the character of Fink himself. For a man who is billed as a firebrand, the author of a startling new play, he seems comatose, imperceptive. His responses to everything—the producer, the dingy hotel room, his neighbor at the hotel—are those of a provincial dullard being smothered in hustle. His reaction to a murder that enters his life would be out of character if he could be said to have a character. Would such a man have colluded in hiding a body? Would he then have sat down and written feverishly night and day with a box on his desk that might well contain a human head? When the hotel is on fire and he is handcuffed to his bed, would he have remained so calm? Only in capital-A Art are such things possible.

John Turturro tries to play Fink, but Fink is not there to be played. Turturro isn't helped by the glasses and high hairdo that are supposed to suggest George S. Kaufman, co-author of *the* Hollywood satire, *Once in a Lifetime*, but even if he were presented otherwise, it wouldn't help. This is hardly his fault, since there are no compass points in the role, no logic—even, so to speak, emotional logic. All Turturro can do is what the Coens give him to do, and (again) they smother him in a series of stupid fabrications.

Three of the characters are graphically written and acted. The bibulous Southern novelist gets undertones of something more than alcoholism from John Mahoney. That splendid Australian actress, Judy Davis, plays his companion with humor and sympathy, though she is burdened with makeup that, in someone's opinion, indicates 1941. I don't recall that women looked like bad postcards of women in those days. John Goodman plays Fink's hotel neighbor,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Boyz N the Hood. *Young blacks in L.A. Not especially original filmmaking, but the subject—the sheer difficulties of survival—is treated with power. (Reviewed 9/2/91)* **Dead Again.** *Kenneth Branagh directs and stars. He and Emma Thompson do well enough, in double roles, in a murder mystery full of time-shift hocus-pocus. A moderately clever potpourri of high-Hollywood styles. (9/16&23/91)* **Hangin' with the Homeboys.** *Young blacks and Hispanics in the South Bronx. Episodic, deftly structured account of hanging out, done with insight, humor, compassion. (8/5/91)* **Straight Out of Brooklyn.** *Blacks, working-class. Despite ungainly touches, this drama of a housing project has pathos and force. Written and directed by 19-year-old Matty Rich. (8/5/91)* **—SK**

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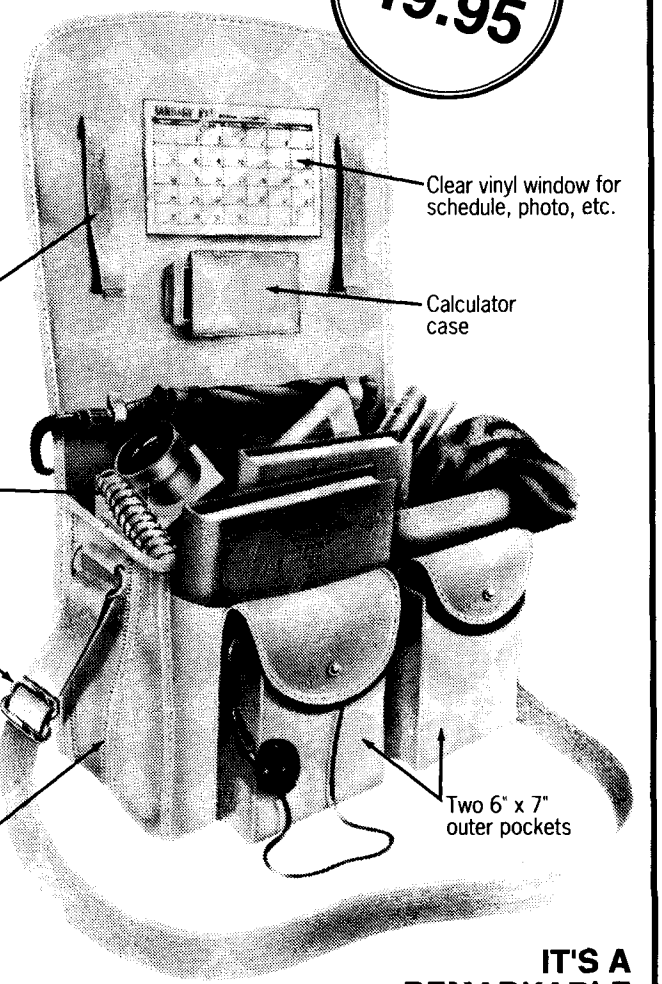
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the insurance salesman, with Rotary good cheer. Goodman gives the part nice shadings, a full palette of old-fashioned salesman's brass-cum-pathos.

All of the picture's strain and silliness is meant to be excused, perhaps praised, because it serves as a base for Coen stylistics. These stylistics mean that, with Dennis Gassner's designs and Roger Deakins's lighting, the Coens have overloaded almost every shot with an impasto of thick, suffocating decor. Everything is italicized—producer's office, dank little hotel room—as a display of a virtuosity that never actually materializes. Pointless overhead shots are plentiful, as are immense close-ups of typing à la *Citizen Kane*. Camera humor is juvenile. (While Fink is making love, the camera pans to the bathroom, then down the drain in the sink.)

The emptiness of Coen cinematics can be shown by one sequence. Fink is called down to the hotel lobby because two men are waiting for him. These men are first seen at some distance, lighted so as to suggest a bas-relief. They turn out to be two L.A. detectives who have come to question Fink. Why the fancy visual introduction? Only because the Coens evidently believe that connections between style and content are irrelevant, that incessant style will lure the viewer into blissful acceptance.

Somewhere in this overupholstered film there is a germ of an idea: a serious writer is paralyzed by the unreality he is asked to write about and is released by a shock of reality. But this theme is only gauzily visible in the hands of these arrogant and, ultimately, obtuse brothers. Not since Robert Altman has any American filmmaker been as overrated as this pair. The Coen brothers are Robert Altman rolled into two.

Barton Fink won the Best Film award at this year's Cannes Film Festival. Joel Coen won the Best Director award, John Turturro the Best Actor award. I note these facts not in fairness but in disgust. •

Saint Frida

BY DEBORAH SOLOMON

Frida Kahlo: The Paintings
by Hayden Herrera
(HarperCollins, 288 pp., $40)

Frida Kahlo: The Brush of Anguish
by Martha Zamora
abridged and translated by Marilyn Sode Smith
(Chronicle Books, 143 pp., $29.95)

Frida Kahlo: Torment and Triumph in Her Life and Art
by Malka Drucker
with an introduction by Laurie Anderson
(A Bantam-Barnard Biography, 176 pp., $16.50, $6 paper)

Dead artists, as much as living ones, can become trendy. Such is the case with Frida Kahlo, whose beatification, high and low, cultural and commercial, is now under way. Kahlo, who died in 1954 at the age of 47, was married to Diego Rivera and is often described as Mexico's foremost woman painter. Among her more visible admirers is the rock star Madonna, whose purchases of Kahlo's work have helped up the prices (one of her self-portraits made news when it was auctioned for $1.65 million last May) and who recently told an interviewer: "One film I want to do is the Frida Kahlo story, which I got interested in because I love her paintings.... I hear that there are a million people who are all doing Frida projects." A million Frida projects? And what is a Frida project, anyway? Presumably Madonna does not refer to museum exhibitions or books devoted to the artist's work; but those, too, are proliferating.

It is odd to see Kahlo find the fast track. Am I the only one who has trouble imagining the American Material Girl playing the Mexican Communist? The media, too, is facilely in love with the artist. Last year, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art put on the memorable if bloated exhibition "Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries," it became difficult to open a magazine without seeing yet another reproduction of a Kahlo self-portrait. It isn't hard to understand why people find Kahlo's pictures so appealing. She has, you might say, inherited Anne Sexton's audience. She was one of the most explicitly autobiographical artists of our century, recording key events in her life like a medieval artist memorializing scenes from the life of a saint. And in her consecration of her own experiences, she was the consummate amateur artist: anyone who has ever written a few poems or tossed a clay pot is likely to be drawn to the homespun, confessional, and bluntly expressive qualities of her work.

Kahlo first took up painting in 1926, while recuperating from a trolley car accident that left her partially crippled when she was just 18. She would always look to art as a way of telling stories about the circumstances of her life, in particular her many rounds of surgery and her tempestuous marriage to Rivera. Her noisy, unsophisticated work is a perfect union of popular Romanticism and doctrinaire feminism, confirming at once the notion that art is the product of suffering and the dearly held belief that no one suffers more than women. Her paintings seize on illness as an appropriate metaphor for her gender. They seem to say that to be a woman is to ache. It is hard to think of another artist who offers a more politically correct vision of womanhood.

Kahlo's pictures do have an appealing intensity. She was the daughter of a German Jew and his Mexican wife, and she combined a Jewish feeling for psychic suffering with a Mexican feeling for bold design. Yet she remains an exceedingly minor artist, formally crude and expressively repetitious, a one-painting painter. Looking at her pictures one sees the same woman, with her granite features and run-together eyebrows, again and again. We see her being born, crying over her crooked spine, longing morosely for her absent husband. There is even a painting that shows her hemorrhaging during a miscarriage. All in all, however, it isn't clear that Kahlo was more miserable than most other artists. (I doubt that she was more unhappy than, say, Käthe Kollwitz, Arshile Gorky, or Lee Krasner, to name just a few of her contemporaries.) What sets Kahlo apart is not her suffering, but her lack of interest in any distance from it, the unanalyzed insistence with which she forced disappointments into paint.

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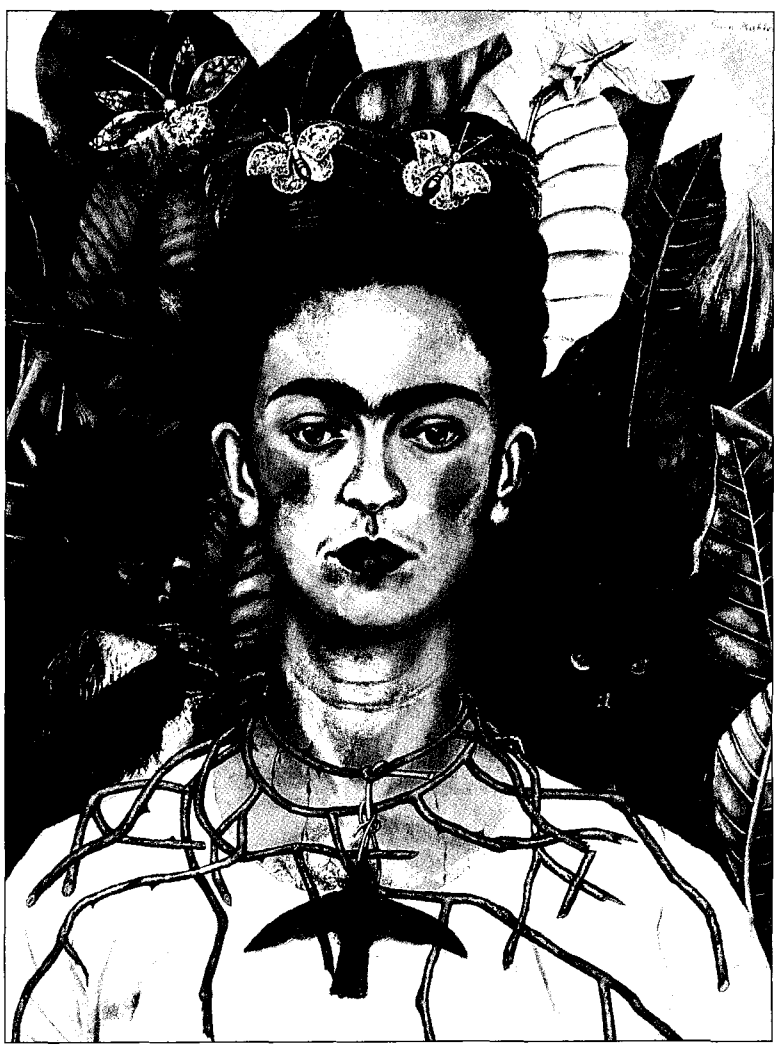
Every artist is always talking to one person in his work, often to an older artist. Kahlo is always talking to Rivera. Her paintings can be seen as imploring love letters to him, particularly the self-portraits from the 1940s for which she is best known. (Kahlo's self-portraits represent the bulk of the roughly 200 or so pictures produced in the course of her short career.) Most of them show her from the torso up, her black eyes confronting the viewer with a mixture of defiance and need. While her props vary widely—from one painting to the next the artist might depict herself enshrouded in a lace headdress, accompanied by a bright-eyed parrot, or bearing a miniature portrait of Rivera stamped symbolically on her brow—what's striking is how she looks the same in almost every painting. As the years progress, her expression does not change; it keeps its stony immobility. Unlike Rembrandt, unlike Chuck Close, Kahlo didn't paint self-portraits as explorations of herself. Most artists paint to see, but Kahlo painted to be seen.

What led her to turn her life into spectacle? An easy explanation would refer to narcissism. (The word certainly describes the Museo Frida Kahlo, her blue-painted house in the old, lovely neighborhood of Coyoacan in Mexico City, where dishes, clothing, and political pamphlets, among much else, are displayed like holy relics.) Perhaps a better explanation for Kahlo's exhibitionist art is the influence of Rivera upon it. He came of age in the years following the Mexican Revolution of 1910, when artists were consumed with political ideals and took up mural painting to popularize them. Art historians have often observed that Kahlo's pictures, which are diminutive in size and ostensibly "personal," have nothing in common with the big propagandistic murals with which Rivera earned his first fame. Yet are their paintings really so different? They certainly share an armored, club-them-over-the-head tone. They are both tendentious, his about public dogmas, hers about private ones. Kahlo's little paintings tell of personal dramas with precisely the bravado and muscularity inscribed in her husband's historical and ideological adventures.

Kahlo never joined up with the modern movement, though you could make a modernist out of her: the space in her paintings is very shallow, and a dedicated formalist might admire the manner in which a leaf, a piece of fruit, or a face presses flat up against the picture plane. Yet Kahlo's flatness derives from the visual simplicities of folk art, not from the spatial and philosophical inquiries of cubism. Similarly, the phantasmagorial aspects of her imagery (she once painted herself sleeping beneath a skeleton) belong more to Mexico City than to Paris. Though her pictures can seem surreal, this is not surrealism.

Perhaps Kahlo eschewed the great European art movements because she didn't want to compete with Rivera: if she adopted a Sunday-painter style, no one could accuse her of being too ambitious. The irony is that what was conceived on her part as a vibrant offspring of folk art quickly hardened into its very opposite, into the stale, unfelt language of illustration. (That is one of the risks of starting out without artistic models.) Her draftsmanship was completely academic in spirit, if not in origin.

In a group exhibition, Kahlo's work certainly stands apart. A handful of her paintings were included in the Met's "Mexico" show last fall, and they had a kind of arresting vividness that turned the works sharing the wall with them into an anonymous, embrowned blur. Taken together, however, her paintings quickly become tiresome. Nearly all of them are made the same way, and all of them [illegible] off the same victimized, overintimate point of view. Consider *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, which was done in 1940.



SELF-PORTRAIT WITH THORN NECKLACE AND HUMMINGBIRD (1940)

The inert heavy-handedness attending so much of Kahlo's work is copiously evident in this small, vertical painting. It shows the artist in a tropical setting, her body turned toward the viewer with a harsh, soldierlike frontality. The luxuriant foliage and the black jungle animals lend the picture an air of fecundity, and imply that Kahlo has a special connection to nature. Large leaves, stripped from their branches and arranged into a flat curtain behind her, push her into the viewer's space, while the butterflies that rest on her coiffed head and form a halo with the two flowers above them are designed to demonstrate that she is really primeval, an outsider to culture. If the composition contrives to give Kahlo the weight of myth, so do the symbolic attributes with which she has depicted herself. They include the prickly necklace of the painting's title, the biblical "crown of thorns" feminized and nervily [illegible] into a metaphor for the artist's personal plight. Its tangled branches are here made to suggest innards. It is a necklace of arteries and tubes.

Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace is a striking composition. But it is a composition that belongs more to the language of commercial illustration than to high art. The deliberate primitivism of the picture's subject matter is not echoed in its style, which is sheer overstylization. While the leaves are painted in a pleas-

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ingly distilled, almost abstract way, the head is all hard outlines and closed, congealed shapes, and looks as stiff as a cardboard cutout. At first glance the picture seems almost brutally candid, offering an antidote to the traditional depiction of women in art as passive love-objects. Yet we soon see that it's an icon, a one-sided idealization of its subject: a portrait of Saint Frida, martyr to the ravages of her own interior life.

There is a special irony in the emergence of Kahlo as art's most fashionable victim. For in life she was no van Gogh, no hapless loner mired in impecunious neglect. Much about her existence was, in fact, quite enviable. Born in Coyoacan in 1907, the daughter of a photographer of note, Kahlo grew up in a cultured middle-class household. Legend has it that she first started going with Rivera after interrupting him one day as he was up on scaffolding at Mexico City's Ministry of Public Education and boldly asking his opinion of some paintings she had brought along. They married a few years later, in 1929. Kahlo was 22. Rivera was 43 and already known as one of "Los Tres Grandes" of the Mexican mural movement.

It is a cliché by now to say that Kahlo sacrificed her career for Rivera. It is also a falsehood. As the years progressed she kept painting, and with the help of her husband she gained entry to a world that otherwise would have been permanently sealed off to her. She is one of the few women artists who managed to win a measure of respect in surrealist circles, where she was venerated as the first lady of the Mexican mural movement. Kahlo's Communist politics spoke directly to the *révolté* ethos of surrealism, and one suspects that it was her piquant ways as much as her work that captivated her French admirers. In 1938 André Breton visited Mexico and praised Kahlo's work for its "pure surreality," and later that year he helped arrange for her first show at the prominent Julien Levy Gallery in New York.

Kahlo's marriage to Rivera was one of the more histrionic alliances in art. They argued, took lovers, acquired separate houses, threatened divorce, went through with it, remarried. Rivera was not exactly a winning partner. There was a marked strain of selfishness and indiscretion in his charm. He taunted his wife with his many affairs, the most alarming of which was conducted with her younger sister. Such behavior was received by Kahlo with predictable protests of wrath and indignation, but she was no slouch at adultery herself. Her amatory conquests extended to both sexes and included such world-class notables as Isamu Noguchi and Leon Trotsky, the latter of whom moved into her house (along with his wife) in 1937, after Rivera convinced the Mexican government to grant him political asylum and promptly volunteered Kahlo's quarters as their new home. And when Kahlo broke off with Trotsky, she really broke off: her next Russian crush was Stalin. Though she never met him, her *Frida and Stalin*, an unfinished commemorative painting from 1954, shows her posed dreamily in front of a looming portrait of the tyrant, her petite frame cloaked in a scarlet dress that salutes at once her love of Reds and of everything red-hot. (Kahlo's communism did not interfere, incidentally, with her social pursuit of Nelson Rockefeller and other influential Americans.)

The literature on Kahlo is fairly plentiful, though most of it is virtual hagiography. She is the only artist I can think of who was the subject of a full-scale biography before there was even a monograph or a picture book to show readers what her paintings look like. The biography, by Hayden Herrera, was published in 1983, when Kahlo was still known in this country primarily as a famous painter's wife. If Herrera's biography failed to bring a critical perspective to its subject, it traced the trajectory of the artist's life with estimable clarity. And largely as a consequence of this well-received book, Kahlo became known in America as an epitome of feminist bohemian chic. By the end of the '80s lustrous reproductions of her paintings were filling catalogs and wall calendars.

Now a picture book has at last appeared, sanctimoniously titled *The Brush of Anguish*. It is an appealing production, as coffee-table books go—above-average color reproductions on heavy, low-gloss paper, a generous selection of snapshots of the artist, and a helpful chronology tying things up—but it, too, views Kahlo as a saint with a paintbrush, and so it is a book for fans only. It certainly leaves room for a serious monograph on the artist's work, which Herrera herself has now attempted to fill in *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings*. This book's no-nonsense title might seem to promise that Kahlo is about to be treated finally, only, seriously, as a painter.

So much for promises. Herrera's new monograph is basically an abridged version of her biography. The paintings continue to be treated as documents of an unhappy person's life and nothing more. By the end, the reader knows everything about Kahlo's marital woes, medical ails, and tastes in clothing (she liked long Tehuana dresses), but fundamental art-historical questions remain unconsidered. What is Kahlo's place in Mexican art? What is her place in modern art? Was she a better artist than Rivera? What is good in her work and what is bad? Whom has she influenced? Who influenced her? Not a real consideration of any of this. Kahlo is once again exempted from the standards of art and promoted into a heroine of modern life. "To people who are ill," Herrera concludes, "indeed to anyone oppressed by almost any sorrow, she offers hope." This, of course, is a claim that could fairly be made about Helen Keller.

Surely it is a mistake to look to artists for lifestyle guidance. Still, if any more evidence is needed of the durability of this approach to Kahlo, and of the invincibility of her myth, it will be found in *Frida Kahlo: Torment and Triumph in Her Life and Art* by Malka Drucker. This is a kind of inspirational book aimed at young women and their well-known need for "role models"—that is, it has been released by Bantam in conjunction with Barnard College, and is the first in a projected series of books devoted to the lives of distinguished women. Each book will feature an introduction by a Barnard alumna, and for Kahlo the college has obtained the critical services of the spiky-haired performance artist Laurie Anderson, class of '69. The book, like its prede-

Collected Shorter Poems of W.H. Auden

What you were, or are, is no longer clear
To you. This we can learn from the certainty
With which you savage your fine, early self,
Proceeding from lately discovered regulations
Based on a hatred of what you now
Think you sounded like: too many "the's,"
An abuse of self-importance characteristic,
Perhaps, in general, of youth; too many commas,
Now clearly erased because at sixty
You surely know the way the words of forty
Intended. Are you now someone else so clearly?
A different man, of elasticized mind, restrolling
The lacustrine absorptions at Vevey,
Suddenly understanding how misguided you'd been
In the young, blundering place of your genius?

David M. Katz

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cessors, is completely platitudinous (there is a chapter titled "Miscarriage"). The most significant thing about this book, indeed, is its cover, on which two chic names come together like celebrities clinking glasses at a cocktail party.

One reason that writers keep dwelling on the personal details of Kahlo's life is that she herself didn't want us to forget them. Still, one wonders why discussion of her work has remained so trapped in a cocoon of biographia. Other artists, after all, have painted in an autobiographical vein, and that hasn't blinded scholarship to the larger aims of their undertaking. Picasso is the obvious example. He, as much as Kahlo, lived the events that surface in his work, yet we don't treat his art as a document of behavioral psychology. And we don't call him Pablo. Why is Kahlo referred to as Frida in every book currently available on her? How has it come to be that the world is on a first-name basis with her yet remains virtually ignorant of, and uninterested in, her place in art?

The answer is that Kahlo is more powerful as a personality than as a painter. She was ambitious, but not for art: she wasn't interested in breaking new ground, in advancing the form. And the fault lies with her defenders as well. They call her Frida, they natter on like fishwives about the details of her life, they permit themselves a familiarity with her that seems more fitting for a Hollywood star than a serious artist—they treat her in such a casual and votive way—because she was a woman. Women artists may be treated differently. Thus it is that Kahlo's feminist admirers keep her down, limit her to her gender, reduce her work to easy uplift. They are victimizing their beloved victim.

DEBORAH SOLOMON is writing a biography of Joseph Cornell, to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

A sober look at what was not achieved in the war.

Operation Desert Shill

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK

I.

Lionization is for the most part a sweet fate, except that the lion must live with the knowledge that eventually irksome revisionism will arise. Typically, the tarnish is applied posthumously, sparing the great figure's sensibilities. But given the accelerated nature of the Persian Gulf war—the conflict has already been over for as long as it was in gestation—the publication of the first round of Desert Storm quick-books is reason enough to bring the public view of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf back into touch with reality.

These lightning books about the lightning war take the same attitude toward Schwarzkopf, which is hero worship. There is much in Schwarzkopf's character and achievements to admire, and a critical assessment of his life might well conclude with a gloria. A central problem with instant books, however, is that their authors lack the time for seasoned reflection. That everyone writing about Schwarzkopf has so far come to the same conclusion suggests that no one has yet thought the man through.

For books produced under pressure, three of the four reviewed here have surprising merit. Roger Cohen, a *New York Times* correspondent, and Claudio Gatti, the American bureau chief for the magazine *Europeo*, do an admirable job of exploring Schwarzkopf's career and personal life; and often their writing is graceful. Their book hails its subject as someone who "achieved overwhelming victory through what may only be called a genius for war." It suffers, though, from excessive filler about the general's family and the peripheral events in his life: the kind of material required for a work committed to press with insufficient time to research such matters as what actually happened in Operation Desert Storm.

In the Eye of the Storm: The Life of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf
by Roger Cohen and Claudio Gatti
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 342 pp., $19.95)

Stormin' Norman: An American Hero
by Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta
(Zebra Books, 192 pp., $4.50)

H. Norman Schwarzkopf: Road to Triumph
by Captain M.E. Morris, USN (ret.)
(St. Martin's, 287 pp., $4.99)

Desert Victory: The War for Kuwait
by Norman Friedman
(Naval Institute Press, 435 pp., $24.95, $18.95 paper)

There is numbing detail, for example, on the portentous day in 1852 when Schwarzkopf's great-grandfather arrived in the New World aboard the packet ship *Helene*; about Schwarzkopf's sister's husband, a "European Jewish intellectual" who taught at Oberlin but unaccountably "never dwelled at length on Jean-Paul Sartre in class"; about Christmas at the Schwarzkopf house, where the general "does not dress up, but he does distribute the gifts ... the family sets a special breakfast." (Just what Schwarzkopf declines to dress up as is never revealed.) The family fluff is owed to Gatti's friendship with one of Schwarzkopf's sisters, which seems to have been a leading reason that the publisher commissioned this project. Schwarzkopf, contemplating his own book, never spoke to the authors, an omission that they fudge. The tip-off is in the acknowledgments, where the general's television interviews with Barbara Walters and David Frost are cited as "an invaluable source."

There are the inevitable signs of haste, from some failed atmospherics ("Vietnam was a place of rumors, none of them ever confirmed") to clumsy organization. We read of Schwarzkopf in Southeast Asia, floating safely above his troops in a helicopter and ordering them out of armored vehicles to move through a mine field on foot, which makes him sound rather like a madman; and a full nineteen pages pass before the authors mention that under some circumstances infantrymen in a mine field are safer dismounted. And words and references are often misused, as when the authors declare that coalition success in the Gulf "confounded the Cassandras." Cassandra was *not* believed when she predicted dooms that occurred.

Stormin' Norman: An American Hero b

GREGG EASTERBROOK is a contributing editor of *Newsweek* and *The Atlantic*.

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Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta explores much the same background territory, often calling on the same sources. This thin book proceeds with a measure of style, given Anderson and Van Atta's reputations as plodding scribes; and somehow, perhaps owing to the speed-of-light technology of publishing, it includes several pages on what happened once the shooting started, despite the fact that it beat Cohen and Gatti's book into print by three months. Anderson and Van Atta's work ends by reminding Schwarzkopf of the Roman saying that fame is fleeting. *Desert Victory* by Norman Friedman, a military analyst affiliated with the Naval Institute, whose press launched Tom Clancy, adds to the Schwarzkopf cult some substantial analysis of the Gulf fighting. His is the first Desert Storm book likely to have an enduring shelf life.

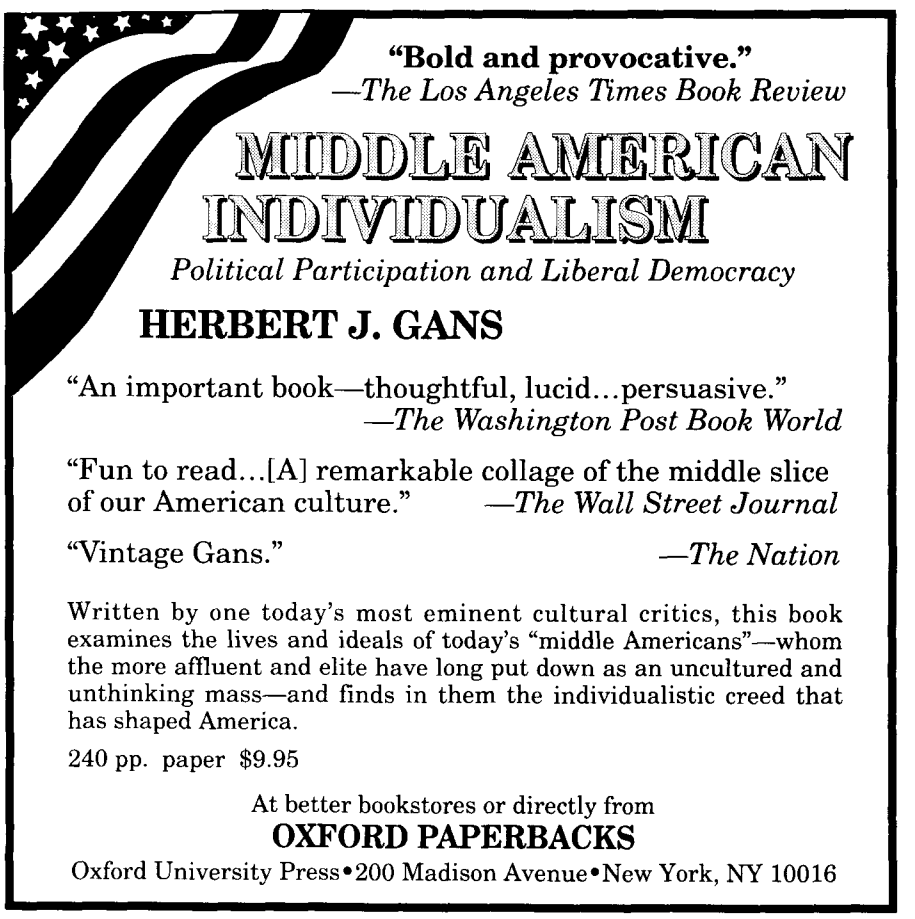
H. Norman Schwarzkopf: Road to Triumph by M.E. Morris is another matter. Morris's prose is a great argument for ghostwriters. He annoys the reader with such quirks as endlessly referring to what happened as DESERT STORM: "Who better to lead a DESERT STORM than Stormin' Norman! Gen. Schwarzkopf is 56 years old, six foot three, has an IQ of 170, and reportedly weighs 240 as of this writing. He doesn't strike you as particularly overweight. Rather, he strikes you as the type of man that you would dearly love to have at your side in a dark alley." Perhaps it is an occasion for relief that such a large man doesn't strike you. And "Those dark eyes—that to a fellow soldier project laser beams demanding performance—probably present a challenge to the fairer sex. Here is a man they would like to tame...." Laser beams that demand performance? Do the SDI folks know about this?

If everyone believes something, it can't possibly be true. On the basis of this wisdom, the careful examination of Schwarzkopf may begin. He is a gifted commander, to be sure; but already he has been promoted into one of the great lights of military history. This seems hard to swallow as, a year after the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam is secure in Baghdad and in possession of weapons of mass destruction, and his people's suffering has increased. In some senses it is not even clear that we won the war, though we certainly won the parade.

The first step in assessing Schwarzkopf is to relieve him of any onus for the rose petals that the American hype machine now scatters in his path. It is not his fault that news organizations idolize his image. It is so vendible. For all the zillions of words about and images of Schwarzkopf, however, few sentences have been written about Lieutenant General Charles Horner, who ran the air campaign, by some measures the most successful in military annals. Horner has no catchy nicknames and he isn't six-three; he looks like a wood shop teacher and speaks with a soft voice, so he's not promotable. Nor has much been said about Lieutenant General William Pagonis, who ran logistics, which was the most impressive aspect of Desert Storm. Logistics is central to military success, but it is as dull as rotating stock in a 7-Eleven, and it is burdened in the popular imagination as being safe work far from the front. In the Gulf war, however, Pagonis and Schwarzkopf shared precisely the same level of exposure to enemy fire—that is to say, zero. Schwarzkopf experienced the war from an air-conditioned office in Riyadh.

Next, Schwarzkopf must be excused from blame for the rupees being dropped on his head along with the ticker tape. His memoirs sold for $5 million to $6 million, and his speeches are booking at $60,000 a pop. If these figures are excessive, Schwarzkopf himself is not the cause. The publishing industry is infamous for both overpaying and underpaying for manuscripts. And if people really want to pay $60,000 to hear a few homilies about who gets going when the going gets tough, Schwarzkopf would be a fool not to accede. The interesting question is, instead, what Schwarzkopf will do with the wealth that our peculiar system now confers on him. Will he become a tawdry pitchman, plugging sweepstake offers on cable or replacing Karl Malden in the American Express ads? (POV: Yuppies robbed of oil leases by seedy Arab figures near exotic old city bazaar. Various European onlookers appear indecisive. Schwarzkopf: "You've just left home without close air support. What will you do. WHAT WILL YOU DO?") Perhaps Schwarzkopf will share some of his windfall with the men and women whose sacrifice made his riches possible; he could at least turn down, or give to charity, the estimated $76,000 annual pension that he will receive.

Cohen and Gatti assert that Schwarzkopf tried to decline some of the spotlight, asking, for instance, that his return to MacDill AFB in Tampa be a quiet affair, then allowing an oom-pah-pah media event when he heard that MacDill families were upset that they would lose their moment in the limelight. But in how many parades has Schwarzkopf now ridden atop the creped Mustang? He has certainly been unable to resist collecting honors. It was kind of the queen to offer Schwarzkopf a symbolic knighthood, but this gruff American populist hero might


"Bold and provocative."
—The Los Angeles Times Book Review
MIDDLE AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM
Political Participation and Liberal Democracy
HERBERT J. GANS
"An important book—thoughtful, lucid...persuasive."
—The Washington Post Book World
"Fun to read...[A] remarkable collage of the middle slice of our American culture." —The Wall Street Journal
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have said something important about democratic values by declining the distinction, explaining that opposition to titles had something to do with the founding of this republic. And Schwarzkopf accepted the Distinguished Order of Kuwait (crested bearer bonds on a field of ingots above an ermine slipper resting on the back of the masses) from that degenerate coward the Emir, whom he addressed as Your Highness.

Nor can Schwarzkopf be blamed for the fact that his reputation is based largely on showings at press appearances, though this has little to do with his performance as an officer. A cassette of his "mother of all briefings" is among the best-selling videos of the year. CNN, ABC, PBS, and others have Stormin' Norman VCR products available, the PBS version promising to let viewers "share the General's finest hour," which seems to have been the briefing about the war, not the outcome of the war.

Schwarzkopf has discovered the secret to contemporary media success: attack the media. In a sense, this is picking on the weak, though it is certainly not picking on the innocent, for most journalists understand little of military affairs and are easily cowed. And the general's tactic is sure-fire, because these days the press promotes those who attack the press. Snarling at public officials was once a way for journalists to advance their careers; when the public mood turned against the press, snarling back at reporters began to advance the prospects of public officials. Both methods give the impression of courage, though in neither case is risk incurred.

Defense Secretary Cheney employed this technique brilliantly during the war, backing down reporters by intimating that briefing questions—not answers, *questions*—could reveal information that would cost American lives. This, while news organizations were uniformly hawkish, functioning in abject terror of being accused of losing another war. Reporters openly rooted for the shooting to start. The media's only real point of contention with the Pentagon was over how much of the devastation could be broadcast live. Others have commented that members of Congress and the administration found it easy to be gung-ho because their children's lives were not at risk in the coalition forces. The same was true, however, of the Washington press corps, now an upper-middle establishment institution. Did a single prominent journalist have a son or a daughter in uniform and in danger in the desert?

Schwarzkopf's verbal counterattack policy went to his head when he made his "military fairies" speech following a parade in his honor at West Point. "After Vietnam," he said, "we had a whole cottage industry develop, basically in Washington, that consisted of a bunch of military fairies that had never been shot at in anger, who felt fully qualified to comment on the leadership abilities of the United States Army." Three items about this statement bear animadverting upon. First, the never-shot-at-in-anger crowd includes many prominent Reagan and Bush hawks, such as the current secretary of defense, who has long considered himself qualified to comment on military affairs even though he made use of various deferments to evade the Vietnam draft. Second, a Schwarzkopf aide promptly told the Associated Press that "the term military fairies was not meant as a slight to the gay and lesbian communities." It is a sign of the social transformation of the military, and a sign that it is coming to its senses on this matter, that even hard-bitten generals now worry more about offending homosexuals than offending journalists and Brookings types. Third, and most important, the carping from the fairies committed to "military reform" in the 1980s had as much to do with preparing American forces for their performance in the Gulf as anything else.

Ten American presidents have been retired generals. The most recent, Dwight Eisenhower, was about the same age as Schwarzkopf when he declared himself, at the close of World War II, and just like Schwarzkopf, lacking in political ambitions. Seven years later he ran for president. So Schwarzkopf's disinterest in public office, no doubt sincere today, may not presage his future. And that makes a cool evaluation of Desert Storm all the more important.

II.

No general who could say "I love you" to a uniformed audience, as Schwarzkopf did reviewing the troops at his retirement ceremony in August, will satisfy many conventional assumptions about the military mind. Schwarzkopf's instant biographers agree that a defining aspect of his character is the love that soldiers extend to their comrades: a love said to be inaccessible to those who have not shared the soldier's experience of living by arbitrary orders, of knowing that his own death or the death of friends may come at any time according to an essentially random process that has meaning only if his fellow countrymen remember. This soldier's love of those who bear the sacrifice, and its concomitant acknowledgment of one's own sacrifices is deeply rooted in Schwarzkopf.

Many pop-psych insights have been cranked out of the fact that Schwarzkopf's father, as commandant of the New Jersey State Police in the 1920s, handled the Lindbergh kidnapping case. Probably the main lesson that young Norman carried away from his father's experience was to distrust the press, which alternatively worshiped and mocked the elder Schwarzkopf, depending on which way the wind was blowing. The instant biographers also attribute significance to the father's later years in Iran, when he helped organize what became the internal police force of the Shah. Through his father's letters from Iran, young Norman was taught to respect Islamic culture, a lesson that served well during Desert Storm. And it is often noted, too, that as a student at West Point, Schwarzkopf's favorite military figure was William Tecumseh Sherman, who conducted some of history's most punitive campaigns, but also spoke eloquently of the fallacy that there is glory in war.

It seems likely, however, that the defining experience of Schwarzkopf's life was the war in Vietnam, where soldiers had to love each other because no one else would love them. He served two tours there, a year starting in June 1965 as an "adviser," then a second tour commencing in June 1969, six months at a desk job followed by six months as commander of a battalion. Schwarzkopf's instant biographers variously present their subject in Vietnam as both a man of honor and a Colonel Kurtz. Often he showed genuine concern for the well-being of the least of his charges, up to the celebrated instance in which, struggling to keep himself from fainting from sheer fear, Schwarzkopf crawled through a mine field to rescue an enlisted man. (See "Operation Desert Norm" by C.D.B. Bryan, TNR, March 11.) Such behavior displayed true courage; and the fact that a flag-rank officer had risked his body for an enlisted man is the kind of news that gets around quickly among grunts. Foot soldiers will take risks for officers who take risks for them.

During Schwarzkopf's "adviser" stint, Vietnam was considered a valid cause by many soldiers: a fight to protect an innocent nation from tyranny. Cohen and Gatti describe Schwarzkopf as "an idealist about war"—as someone who believes that combat, for all its horrors, can serve a constructive role in human affairs. In the mid-'60s it was still possible to view Vietnam in that way. Troops who served with Schwarzkopf at that time came away affectionately calling him "Stormin' Norman" or "the Bear."

By the time of Schwarzkopf's 1970 tour, however, few American soldiers in

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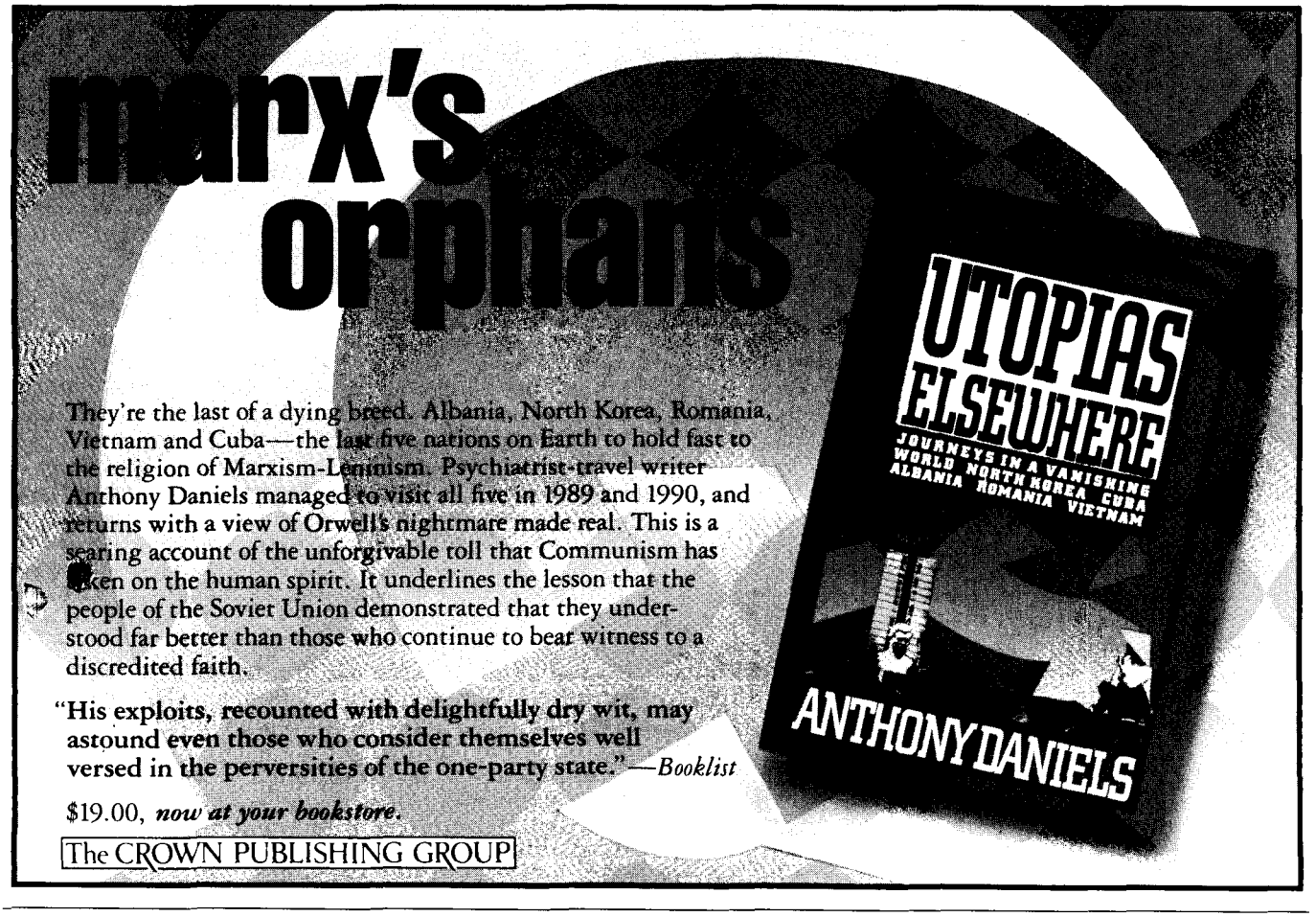
Vietnam believed in what they were doing. Infantrymen wanted passive commanders who would take up defensive positions and let time pass until everyone could go home in one piece. But aggressive officers such as Schwarzkopf believed that the war was dragging on because field commanders had lost the will to prosecute it. In his six months running the First Battalion of the Sixth Infantry, Schwarzkopf often ordered his charges into battle while similar units "lied" in their tents. His nicknames now became "Colonel Nazi" or "the Buddy Butcher." In the latter phases of Vietnam, aggressive officers were especially despised, because they spent only six-month tours at risk while grunts typically were in danger twice as long and received no career benefits from the experience.

Thus the standard media line that Schwarzkopf was deeply adored by his troops, which may have been true about the Gulf war, when all serving were volunteers rather than conscripts, and conditions of service had improved, and the cause was widely supported at home, has little truth about Schwarzkopf's Vietnam years. The general's instant biographers struggle inconclusively with this complication. And Schwarzkopf himself struggled with the Vietnam behavior of the officer corps. He is said by Cohen and Gatti several times to have considered resigning his commission, out of contempt for an Army that tolerated incompetent, career-obsessed, or cruel leaders. "I've known a lot of generals who were war lovers," Schwarzkopf has said. "They scare the living hell out of me, and they're also not very good generals." He has often spoken of "the profanity of war."

For Schwarzkopf, one profane element of Vietnam was the inflated body count. Schwarzkopf is among the few American senior military leaders who have admitted that officers regularly dreamed up body counts during Vietnam. He says that he did so himself, to keep headquarters off his back. Cohen and Gatti's book contains an amusing section in which other officers claim to be shocked—shocked!—by this information. Retired Major General Leroy Suddath, a West Point classmate, is quoted as saying, "Schwarzie never lied [about numbers]. I never lied. *No officer would do that.*" (Italics original.) And there is the eternal naif William Westmoreland, declaring that Schwarzkopf's admission stunned him. "What a shocking statement," Westmoreland told Cohen and Gatti. "I can't conceive of any [officer] encouraging a lie or his lying even if encouraged to do so. The remark showed a side of [Schwarzkopf's] personality I was not aware of, a vindictive side."

Vindictive? Schwarzkopf successfully punched his ticket in Vietnam, but he did not emerge from the war on the four-star fast track, which he would not reach until years later. Perhaps he carries bitterness about this slight by the Army brass, which was often uncomfortable with officers who thought that Vietnam was fought faintheartedly. He unquestionably has an ugly side. This might explain why the institutional military is said to have been relieved by his decision to retire rather than accept an offer to become Army chief of staff. Maybe it was Schwarzkopf's nasty temper, maybe it was their own jealousy, but few officers wanted Norman stormin' around the Pentagon on a daily basis.

Schwarzkopf is supposed to have told friends that he did not want the chief of staff position because he cannot stand the bureaucratic politics of the Pentagon. Between Vietnam and the Gulf he served only occasional assignments in Washington, which is not the traditional course for modern political generals who hope to maximize their prospects. Schwarzkopf preferred operational commands at bases or in Europe, seeking the real soldier's experience of communion with other real soldiers. And thus, in 1983, he found himself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second in command at Grenada.

No postwar action alarmed the military fairies more than Grenada. Invading the smallest nation in the world, the forces of the United States committed blunder after blunder. Space-age helicopters were shot down by Cuban construction workers using World War II surplus guns; a SEAL commando team drowned without being fired on; paratroopers were dropped into "secure" areas that were in fact defended; civilian targets were bombed; interservice rivalries were highlighted by the discovery that Army and Air Force units could not communicate with each other because their radios used different frequencies. Most important, the medical students, whose rescue supposedly justified the attack, were not located until some thirty-six hours after the invasion began. Had there been a real danger that local forces would execute the students, Grenada would now stand as one of the greatest embarrassments in the history of statecraft.

Schwarzkopf watched the operation from offshore aboard the helicopter carrier *Guam*. His senior status forbade him from fighting alongside the soldiers he loved, as in Vietnam. By the second day of the operation, Schwarzkopf and his superior, Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, were hosting breakfast for the rescued British official Sir Paul Scoon. The med students still had not been located on the little island.

Metcalf and Schwarzkopf had less than a week to prepare for Grenada. Still, the clumsiness with which they pursued their ostensible objective, the student rescue, is hard to fathom. Had things gone only a little differently, Schwarzkopf's career would have been over. Early in the invasion, Schwarzkopf "was taking care of all operational and military matters," Cohen and Gatti report, while "Metcalf was dealing with the Atlantic Command and the political aspects of the mission." Eventually Schwarzkopf realized that the unknown fate of the students was something of an oversight, and he organized a rescue party of Marines and Rangers. They found the students, who were awaiting the cavalry at a branch of the med school's campus clearly marked on tourist maps and visible from the bridge of the *Guam*. Schwarzkopf would later call the impromptu rescue "absolutely a classic ... a great success." It was about the sole aspect of Grenada that went right.

Intelligence letdowns at Grenada no doubt sowed the seeds for Schwarzkopf's blast against the CIA after Desert Storm. The spooks, for example, gave an all-clear to a parachute drop at the "undefended" airport, which turned out to be ringed with cannons; and only through a stroke of luck, having to do with restricted aiming mechanisms on the enemy's guns, did these weapons fail to slaughter American soldiers hanging helplessly from their silks. Complaints about intelligence in the Gulf war, by contrast, seem less telling. Schwarzkopf's objection was that satellite imagery was nowhere near as useful in calculating bomb damage as gun camera footage from planes delivering the bombs. But it should not surprise anyone that pilots on the scene see more than satellites in outer space: spy satellites are intended for general global snooping, not for battlefield fire control. The nonsense that American satellites can "read the numbers on a license plate" from 23,000 miles crops up so often in the media's gee-whiz stories about military technology that perhaps even smart people like Schwarzkopf believe it. (The practical resolution limit of the best surveillance spacecraft is objects about the size of trucks.)

A disturbing side of Schwarzkopf's nature emerged in the aftermath of Grenada. Claiming distaste over the body count mentality, the Pentagon refused to release estimates of Cuban and civilian dead, and Schwarzkopf went along. At first officials said that their silence about casualties in Grenada was out of respect for an unusual native religion; but most Grenadans are Christians. Then the Pentagon claimed it impossible to acquire accurate numbers, though there was no problem establishing and announcing that 24,768 signal flares had been captured.

The Pentagon had realized that it might have a use for the widespread cultural disapproval of body counts, that it was an effective excuse for avoiding discussion of the fact that wars kill people, that one of the military's own past sins could now be employed for promotional purposes. This technique was seen again after the invasion of Panama in 1989, when it was again impossible to discuss Panamanian casualties. And again at Desert Storm, when the much larger number of Iraqi casualties was glossed over—to the relief of the press corps, since mentioning the dead spoiled the party. Schwarzkopf again went along. Cohen and Gatti criticize him for being a "party to this effort at distortion," using, "lamely," old complaints about the body count mind-set.

After Grenada, the military fairies made a number of forceful points. One was that interservice bickering must be stopped. Until the mid-1980s local commanders in operations such as Grenada effectively could not issue orders to units not from their own service. Metcalf the Navy man was so often on the phone to the Atlantic Command because he was forced to plead for permission to ask the Army, the Air Force, or the Marines to do something. Meanwhile the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not run the military; he merely served as the "spokesman" for the opinions of four pie-dividers from the four services. Schwarzkopf would later lash out at reformers who questioned "the leadership abilities of the United States Army." Never mind that the fairies were saying that people with leadership gifts like Schwarzkopf ought to be turned loose.

The fairy who advanced this view most often was Senator Gary Hart, who spent many hours answering criticisms that the unified command lines he favored were of the same type employed by the Wehrmacht. True, said Hart, they were—and they had worked. Why shouldn't effective methods be used also for just causes? In 1987 Congress passed a bill that reorganized the Joint Chiefs and established streamlined chains of command under which an Army man like Schwarzkopf could give orders to an Air Force man like Horner. Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, could be a direct adviser to the president, not a functionary who endlessly intones that the Air Force says this but the Navy says that. This fairy-designed system performed superbly in the Gulf, enabling a complex campaign to be carried out with none of the interservice snafus that had long characterized simpler undertakings.

Another fairy complaint about Grenada was that high-tech weapons proved unreliable even under the mild stress of that operation. Through the 1980s the Pentagon would gradually get religion on the subject of reliability, altering many expensive systems with the realities of actual use in mind. Hardliners squealed mightily as the fairies made fun of tanks that broke down in front of reviewing stands or automated anti-aircraft guns that locked on latrine fans. But by the time Desert Storm began, American weaponry had become reliable. The machines in the sands did what they were supposed to do.

And finally, in the aftermath of Grenada, the fairies mercilessly complained that the methods of training for American soldiers were not realistic. Most military scientists agree that people, not hardware, determine the outcome of combat. Troops who have not been tested under realistic conditions usually do poorly at the outset, which is one reason that American military his-

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tory is characterized by early debacles followed by amazing comebacks. To rectify this, the Pentagon in the 1980s expanded and began to emphasize what is now considered the world's best combat preparation facility, the National Training Center at Fort Irvine, California. There soldiers using laser-simulated weapons can "shoot" and be "shot" in highly realistic but harmless fashion. Entire armor engagements are staged with everything real except the bullets. Schwarzkopf commanded an Army division in training there in 1984.

Before the ground phase of the Gulf war, it was widely calculated that the Iraqis, lately having fought Iran, would possess the significant advantage of experience over coalition forces. But it turned out to be the other way around. American troops, having rehearsed lightning maneuver warfare in near-battle conditions, were much better prepared for what happened than the Iraqis, who had fought mainly static artillery duels with Iran. And Fort Irvine is in the Mojave Desert. Our side had been training on sand.

III.

Because the forces of the coalition rolled right over the forces of Iraq, historians may someday find it hard to understand why the West was so nervous before the fight. The dud operations of recent years, such as the Iran rescue attempt of 1980, were most of the reason for the case of nerves. (They were much more of a reason than the infamous Vietnam Syndrome, since nobody in the defense establishment believes that the United States lost the war in Vietnam on the field of battle.) Pre-war estimates commonly cited the likelihood of up to 20,000 American ground casualties, plus hundreds of aircraft lost; and Schwarzkopf himself is said to have adduced these numbers to congressional delegations visiting Saudi Arabia in the months of the coalition buildup. It was Schwarzkopf's own projections of such horrible losses—could it really have been worth 20,000 American lives to replace the Emir upon his golden commode?—that fueled some of the anti-war sentiment in Congress.

Had Desert Storm exacted the price of which Schwarzkopf warned, the operation would now be seen as a fiasco of colossal proportions, and the anti-war Democrats would now be admired as wise patriots trying to head off a national disaster. Instead, 263 Americans died in the campaign and only around fifty American aircraft were lost. These figures, a tribute to the skill and the courage of the coalition's soldiers and commanders, are now widely received as miraculous almost to the point of divine providence.

"The war was won by brilliant generalship, not lost by sheer Iraqi incompetence," Cohen and Gatti write. "If victory was always inevitable for the coalition ... it was by no means inevitable that victory would come at such a light cost." This assessment contains considerable truth. But let us imagine for a moment what future historians will see when they review the political and military circumstances of the engagement.

Politically, Iraq was in a situation with few parallels in history—namely, most of the world's powers were committed to attacking it, while it had no allies. Name another war in which the belligerent, however odious, did not possess at least one significant accomplice. Even Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan had each other. Iraq had only Yemen, and by fortunate happenstance Yemen's navy was in dry dock when the fighting broke out, having its oars refitted. (Timorous Jordan lent Iraq some clandestine aid, and the PLO backed Iraq but possesses no state power.) That Iraq utterly lacked allies had multiple benefits for the West, the most significant being that the coalition could act without fear of lasting political consequences: of reigniting the cold war, say, had the Soviet Union or China made gestures on Iraq's behalf.

That Iraq managed to perform the feat of infuriating the entire world is an indication of how deeply contemptible was Saddam's behavior. Still, the significance of a vast, half-world coalition laying siege to a small state without allies cannot be overstated. Saddam's lack of allies meant that there would be no complications as the armies of the world came to Iraq's borders. Provision ships transited the world's waterways without objection, while aircraft flew the shortest routes. No nation fired on the convoys, or threatened to fire on them, as they moved into position. No nation mounted a challenge to the embargo. Had Soviet vessels merely escorted Iraqi freighters through the blockade lines, the sanctions would have evaporated. Soldiers, supplies, and weapons were moved into positions along Iraq's borders in a businesslike fashion. Iraq itself had no navy, and its air force proved such a paper tiger that Iraq was not capable of so much as harassing the arriving forces.

Another important political consideration, curiously forgotten the moment it happened, was Saddam's release in December of his foreign hostages. This was one of the many instances in which Baghdad misjudged the resolve of the

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West. Saddam apparently believed that parallels to the Iran hostage drama were what was upsetting the United States, that as soon as the hostages were free the coalition would dissipate. Why would Saddam have released the hostages if he believed that war was coming? World opinion means nothing to him. Despite George Bush's well-played bluff that he would bomb Iraqi targets regardless of the presence of innocent Western civilians, there is no possibility that the American air campaign would have commenced if one of its consequences would have been the death of many Americans.

And what was Iraq's military condition before the Storm broke? Saddam possessed one of the world's largest armies, but its battle record was laughable. In eight years of war with Iran, attacking just after the Iranian revolution, when the Iranians were in total disarray, Iraq had managed to gain only a few hundred yards of territory. Some Iraqi tactics in the Iran war were straight out of the movie *Grand Illusion.* The country's officer class, stripped of dynamic individuals who might challenge Saddam, showed insecurity about the slightest aggressive action.

Such an inhibition is especially decisive in an era of high-speed war. Basic U.S. military doctrine now calls for forces to stage multiple flanking movements that are "four dimensional," that is, coordinated in time as well as on land, sea, and air. Such movements are effective only if field commanders possess discretion to act on their own initiative, responding to rapidly evolving conditions; and American commanders have that authority. Similarly, four-dimensional attack can be countered only by commanders with the freedom to act. The Iraqi system, however, permits no such freedom. Saddam must authorize everything.

By the time the ground war began, command and control links to Baghdad had been severed or jammed. But if Saddam had still been on the air, it would have done little good, since he never could have made sense of the dozens of jumbled panicky descriptions and pleas for instructions coming in from field commanders. He could never have updated his battle maps quickly enough to send back sensible orders. Totalitarianism may have been an effective system of government organization for past wars. With current military technology, individualism becomes an element of the West's military, as well as ideological, strength.

Cohen and Gatti quote Major General Barry McCaffery, commander of the 24th Mechanized, observing that "never once did we attack an enemy force that saw us coming or was prepared to defend against our attack." Iraqi tanks and guns encountered by the 24th were physically pointed in the wrong direction; and dug in using Maginot revetments, they could not free themselves quickly enough to face toward the trouble before being destroyed. Iraq's arsenal contained some fancy hardware, such as MiG-29 fighters and (to the coalition's surprise at Khafji) infrared-vision devices, but much of the fancy stuff was in disrepair. Most Iraqi soldiers, moreover, were poorly trained in its use. Iraqi pilots, for example, rarely practiced night flying. They had little knowledge of tactics other than unopposed runs at civilian targets, since the Shah's former air force spent most of the Iran-Iraq war mechanically inoperable.

Notably absent from the Iraqi inventory was reliable chemical protection gear. It is now believed that one reason Iraqi commanders did not fire gas at the coalition forces was their awareness that they could not have protected their own soldiers from untoward wind gusts. (Saddam has employed chemicals only against helpless civilians, and only in places remote from Baath forces.) But by far the most important lack in the Iraqi war machine was the lack of intelligence. Baghdad had no satellites, no reconnaissance aircraft capable of running the coalition "air cap." In the most literal sense, Saddam never knew what hit him. Had the Soviets so much as fed Baghdad satellite updates on the gross movements of coalition columns, Schwarzkopf's spectacular "left hook" strategy would not have come as the total shock that it did. Units like the 24th would have encountered guns pointed toward them.

The measure of Iraq's military competence can be seen in the helicopter raid that commenced the air campaign. American gunships snuck up on the Iraqi early-warning radar station in the corridor between Baghdad and the Saudi air bases. The radar dishes disappeared in a sudden salvo of missiles. Hundreds of coalition jets already in the air waiting for the radar to go down then roared through the corridor toward their targets. Bombs were exploding in Baghdad before the searchlights came on. But hold on here. The warning radar positioned between your capital and a huge hostile force suddenly winks out on the very night a deadline expires, and you don't know what that means? Schwarzkopf might as well have gone on CNN and announced the exact moment that the planes would arrive. Iraq's response to the first night of the air war makes Pearl Harbor seem like a model of vigilance. Nothing that happened afterward should have come as a surprise.

IV.

"When [Schwarzkopf] relayed the order 'execute DESERT STORM' to the men and women under his care, he did so with the fullest personal knowledge of the gravity of that decision," writes Morris. "Some of those placed under his care and guidance would die. Others would carry the physical and mental scars of that order for the remainder of their lives. All would know they had acted with honor and with the most noble of purposes." Amen. No army has ever fought in more exemplary fashion, or reached out its hand to the enemy as promptly, or packed to leave as swiftly after accomplishing an internationally sanctioned objective. But did the men and women of Desert Storm really participate in one of the greatest victories in military history?

That is less clear. In sheer numbers, Desert Storm must be counted among history's most lopsided clashes. A vast disparity in losses, of course, is not without precedent. At Cannae in 216 BC, a battle that is said to have fascinated Schwarzkopf in his student days, Hannibal's Carthaginians killed or captured three-quarters of a much larger Roman force. At New Orleans in 1815, the British suffered more than 2,000 casualties, the Americans suffered seventy-one. During a carrier battle off Saipan in June 1944, the Japanese lost 450 aircraft, eight capital ships, and numerous lesser vessels, while American losses were twenty aircraft and no ships. In non-nuclear air strikes, such as the raids on Dresden and Tokyo, huge numbers died to negligible casualties on the part of the attacker.

Still, considering the advantages possessed by Schwarzkopf's force, it would have been amazing had the outcome not been what it was. The U.S. military outspends Iraq's by some 30- to 40-to-1; the combined militaries of the coalition powers, by nearly 100-to-1. Iraq's population is about half that of California. Iraq's prewar GNP was less than 1 percent of the American figure, and utterly undetectable beside the combined economic might of the coalition.

In his war planning, Schwarzkopf evidenced a number of fundamental insights that are greatly to his credit. One was to understand the role of morale in success in war; few generals have worked harder to keep up their charges' spirits. Another was to direct that coalition forces take extraordinary measures to show respect for Islam. One reason that a

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wave of vengeful terror did not materialize in the aftermath of the war may be that images from the Gulf showed the infidels behaving respectfully while Saddam was shooting missiles at Saudi Arabia, the holy land, on Friday, the Muslim Sabbath.

Using his new streamlined authority, moreover, Schwarzkopf restrained the Marines' eagerness for an amphibious assault at Kuwait City. Amphibious operations are the Marines' reason for being. They are also among the most dangerous forms of warfare. For years the Marines have been itching to attempt the first major heliborne and hovercraft landing, a high-tech show that many military analysts consider a formula for body bags. Schwarzkopf saved the lives of many Marines by not authorizing this unnecessary risk, while cleverly using Marine transports as a feint to draw off Iraqi defenders.

Another smart move, again made possible by Pentagon reorganization, was Schwarzkopf's decision to compel the flyboys to bring the A-10 antitank aircraft to the Gulf. Air Force brass have long despised this plane, partly because it exists to support the Army, but mainly because it is ugly, subsonic, and costs about one-tenth as much as the fancy planes with the smart bombs. For a decade the Air Force has been attempting to mothball the A-10, hoping to win funding for a far more expensive replacement, a ground-attack version of the F-16 supersonic fighter. Thus original Desert Storm plans called for leaving the A-10 home, for fear that it would perform well and upset future budget requests.

Schwarzkopf, however, ordered the planes brought; and the A-10s, according to retired Colonel David Hackworth, ended up destroying 70 percent of the Iraqi armor hit from the air. The A-10 has no radar, no laser gizmos, no all-weather electronics. Yet this was the aircraft, Hackworth has written, that was most feared by Iraqi soldiers, because it was nearly impossible to shoot down and could spray an entire area with destruction, rather than making one discrete smart hit then roaring away. Need I add that building and preserving the A-10 was a long-standing cause of the defense reformers? At least the fairies and the Bear agreed on something. (American forces also made great use of cheap remote-piloted drone aircraft for spoofing and reconnaissance, grown-up model planes that were opposed for years by Pentagon factions but were widly backed by the fairies.)

Advantage after advantage favored the coalition. Iraq's geographical encirclement by hostile forces, coupled with its one narrow supply line from Baghdad to Kuwait, meant that once Saddam's invading units were cut off they would have no recourse. Troops were ill supplied with such things as food, and men half-starved for six months do not make effective soldiers. In his excellent book, Friedman reports that many Iraqi armor units lacked supplies as basic as one full magazine per tank. Soviet doctrine, taught to Iraq, insists that there is no point in fully stocking units on the forward battle edge, since they will be destroyed at the beginning of a fight anyway. That is, a tank that can hold sixty main cannon rounds should be equipped with thirty, because it will not be able to get off sixty shots before being blasted. Imagine the warm feeling with which this must have filled Iraqi soldiers. American doctrine, by contrast, stocks all units as though every soldier and vehicle will come through unscathed, communicating to soldiers that their officers expect every one of them to live. Some of the American divisions that engaged Iraqi armor reported expending less than 15 percent of the ammunition they brought with them.

Still another essential component of Schwarzkopf's success was that the bases and ships from which coalition forces operated were never themselves subject to attack, except for occasional Scud strikes of nominal military significance and a few attempts to launch obsolete Silkworm missiles at the fleet. Had the air fields from which coalition jets took off, or the staging bases from which the ground war was supplied, been bombed even occasionally, or the fleet been challenged by modern anti-ship weaponry (especially by submarines), operations would have been much less effective.

But by far the most important factor favoring the coalition was that the Iraqi people, at home and in uniform, did not support the war. American generals often assert that the lack of domestic support made victory impossible for them in Vietnam. Saddam was afflicted by this problem at a far more intense level. At least 71,000 Iraqi soldiers were interested solely in surrender, and the full number that longed to surrender was surely much higher. This explains, for example, the "mystery" of why Iraqi anti-aircraft squads often declined to fire on coalition fighters and helicopters. Units doing so would have destroyed more aircraft, but they would have exposed themselves to destruction by revealing their positions. Withholding fire gave them the hope of emerging from the war alive. It also reduced their side's chance of winning, but few Iraqi grunts seem to have cared a whit about that. Schwarzkopf himself has

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acknowledged that most Iraqi soldiers did not want to be in Kuwait, that they were "kept there at the point of a gun." A well-trained, well-rested, well-equipped, well-motivated professional force, in sum, clashed with a hungry and weary assortment of forced conscripts whose main ambition was to get far enough out of their officers' view to wave a white flag. It would have taken a McClellan to avoid scoring a rout.

Schwarzkopf's famous "left hook"—the shifting of a large contingent many miles west just as the ground war began—and similar maneuvers were planned and executed brilliantly. But considering the hundreds of billions that the United States has invested in helicopters, fast tanks, and other equipment designed for shifting the point of attack very rapidly, the hook damn well better have worked. This flanking thrust has been treated as a stroke of genius, but it should have been obvious to anyone looking at the tactical situation and at the relevant geography in the days before the offensive, and knowing of the coalition's total air and logistical superiority.

More to the point, such tactics are formal Army doctrine. Until a decade ago, the Army's strategic thinking centered on a concept known as active defense. In 1982 active defense was supplanted by a concept known as AirLand Battle (the punctuation is the Army's). AirLand Battle emphasizes the use of American advantages in fast armor and aerial logistics to disorient the enemy with rapidly shifting attacks that are not what they seem; and especially to make sudden flanking maneuvers. In other words, AirLand Battle dictates the left hook. That is why television commentators were widely discussing the move months before it happened. It is also why no comfort was given to the enemy by these open discussions, as some drooling hard-liners charged: the basic AirLand field manual is for sale at the Government Printing Office.

AirLand Battle was, in no small part, a fairy concept. Active defense and a previous doctrine based mainly on attrition were routinely jeered by military reformers as plans that failed to exploit the strengths of the United States in technology and creativity, as well as our democratic willingness to trust individual initiative. Fairies called their preference "maneuver warfare." When the Pentagon finally embraced that concept, a zoomier name was found. (Many within the defense establishment also advocated the idea, as many within that establishment advocated other innovations here broadly credited to the fairies.)

For some reason Schwarzkopf has not been challenged in his self-serving claim that his Army fought in the desert outnumbered two- or three-to-one. American officers are programmed to think in these terms. For years, contemplating the Warsaw Pact, a Pentagon slogan has been "fight outnumbered and win." When the ground war began, however, the numbers favored the coalition. Schwarzkopf had 730,000 soldiers under his command, against a maximum of 540,000 for Saddam, and on a practical basis more likely half that figure, considering surrenders, troops who refused to shoot, and units depleted by the air campaign.

Even luck seemed to side with the coalition. Douglas Waller has reported in *Newsweek* that a few days before the ground offensive, a group of defecting Iraqi engineers brought with them maps of Saddam's mine fields, which were then breached with minimal losses. And on the second day of the hundred hours, a fierce sandstorm began. This restricted the coalition's air support, but it also blinded the already disoriented Iraqis, while our side was able to see through the storm with radars and infrared scanners. It is good to know that fortune does sometimes favor the pure of heart, but this can also make for deceptive margins of victory.

V.

What did the Gulf war prove? Friedman attributes the coalition's success to superiority in logistics, training, and officers. If technology "is the main or sole explanation, then the outcome is not particularly cheering," he writes. Technologically, what was demonstrated was that when the West's equipment of today encounters Eastern bloc and French hardware built ten to twenty years ago, current equipment wins. Again, it had better.

To be sure, a few of the fairies had gone so far as to argue that because the new Western hardware had grown too complex, the old Eastern weapons would actually prevail. This view can now be considered discredited. The costly M-1 Abrams tank and M-2 Bradley "fighting vehicle," both mocked for quirks in testing, vindicated themselves. The expensive stabilizers that allow the M-1 to fire accurately in motion worked flawlessly. The scanners, lasers, and computers that enable M-1s to score hits at about two miles also worked perfectly.

The T-72 tank, the best Iraqi tank and the second-best Russian tank, has a practical accuracy of around one mile. In some engagements, this meant that Iraqi tanks were destroyed before they could draw close enough to take a shot at our side. And when T-72s did manage to hit M-1s, Friedman reports, the rounds often failed to penetrate, frightening the daylights out of American tank crews but leaving them unharmed. Recall that one of the sillier scare stories of the Reagan administration, extensively hyped by conservatives, was that the Russian T-72 gun, with a bigger bore than the M-1 gun, had made M-1 armor obsolete.

That our armor performed so well is good news, but it is not "particularly cheering" for other possible confrontations, since two-mile sight lines for maximum-range hits are rarely as available as they are in a desert. The same applies to the effectiveness of most precision-guided weapons used in Desert Storm. They were employed against targets in a relatively uncluttered flat environment, without jamming or electronic countermeasures on the other side.

The air campaign shows once again that the United States builds the best flying machines in the world and produces the finest pilots. Yet in the end Desert Storm provided still more proof of the limits of air warfare. The combined air might of the Western powers, employed under ideal circumstances against a small nation with no effective aerial resistance, achieving the best bombing accuracy ever, still did not bring down the government of Iraq. Yet this air armada was sold to Congress on the premise that the kind of precise rear-echelon strikes staged against Iraq could force the entire Soviet bloc to yield. Bombing unquestionably "softened" Iraqi positions so that they were easier to overrun when the ground war began, but that softening was possible mainly because the Iraqis offered little resistance to air strikes. Against a military with modern air defenses and interceptor aircraft, the results might be different.

Moreover, the very conscientiousness of American pilots in avoiding indiscriminate bombing backfired in one respect on the citizens of Iraq. Because bombing accuracy has always been poor, in previous wars attempts to destroy economic targets such as bridges, power plants, and refineries have never met expectations. In Desert Storm, the bombs finally hit home. Accurate weapons have mora advantages over the older kind; far fewer accidental civilian deaths are caused. Ye all Iraqi civilians will suffer for years to come from the precision with which coalition pilots smashed their country's economic infrastructure.

One false conceit of the Gulf war is the view that the success of the F-117 stealth fighter is an argument for the B-2 stealth

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bomber. The F-117 was indeed able to strike targets accurately without being shot down—but then so was every airplane the coalition employed. Old, radar-friendly standbys built in the 1960s such as the B-52, A-6, F-4, and F-111 pranced through enemy airspace with seeming immunity, Iraq's overrated defenses having been "suppressed" with unfailing efficiency by coalition jammers and anti-radar weapons. In the early hours of the first Baghdad strike, more than 200 radar-seeking missiles were fired at Iraqi SAM sites, along with dozens of special drones that confuse radar operators. All this anti-radar weaponry means the F-117's stealth properties were never really tested. After a few nights of such attacks on the Iraqi air defense network, even the clumsy, straight-wing A-10 was able to conduct deep strikes into enemy territory with the equivalent of stealth.

And where was the B-1, sold to Congress as a dual-role nuclear and conventional bomber? Besides the F-117, the B-1 is the only other operational stealth aircraft in the world; its radar cross section is but a fraction of the B-52 figure. Yet the cheap, outdated B-52 was in the Gulf and working, while the money-is-no-object stealthy B-1 sat home.

Now that radar-evasion technology exists, all future combat aircraft should incorporate it in cost-effective doses. But Desert Storm suggests that the B-2 would not be a cost-effective acquisition. The bomber's principal rationale is that it would search the post-Armageddon Soviet landscape for mobile missile launchers. Yet the combined air might of the coalition powers spent five weeks doing just that in Iraq, and it failed to knock out more than a few mobile Scud launchers, despite operating nearly unopposed with AWACS updates, satellite data, and special forces teams inside Iraq marking positions. If a huge force flying for weeks has trouble finding mobile missiles in a relatively confined space, how is the B-2 supposed to accomplish this on a single pass over the area of an entire continent?

There remain a few matters of morality.

The strangest aspect of Schwarzkopf's behavior in the Gulf was his helicopter policy. At the parley with Iraqi commanders after the truce, Schwarzkopf agreed to the other side's request to operate helicopters but not fixed-wing aircraft. He thought that the Iraqis were pushing this distinction with the intention of moving government officials around a country whose highways now had no bridges. Yet as soon as the Shiites and Kurds commenced (at American urging) their rebellion, Saddam began using heli-

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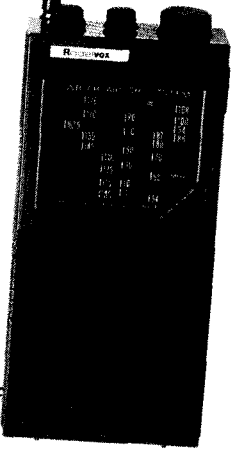

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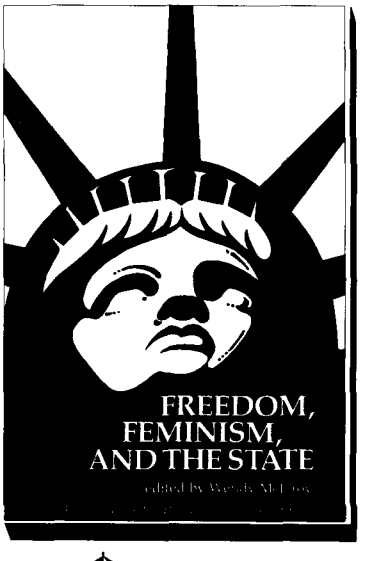

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copters to slaughter civilians. The West did nothing. In some cases Iraqi helicopters machine-gunned columns of fleeing women and children within view of our forces.

An "idealist about war" might have jumped to the defense of these unfortunates. Many coalition soldiers and pilots, hearing of the massacres, were anxious to return to arms. But Schwarzkopf did nothing. He merely grumbled that he was "suckered" by Iraqi generals into a truce condition that was being misused. So what? Iraq's surrender had been unconditional. Schwarzkopf could have simply declared the helicopter provision void.

Of course, it was Bush, or Cheney, or Powell, who had the authority, and the responsibility, to make such a declaration. Instead they showed disdain for the lives of poor brown people in northern Iraq, when the lives of rich brown people in Kuwait were of intense concern to them. But why didn't Schwarzkopf speak out? Generals on active duty retain First Amendment rights regarding public policy questions. Schwarzkopf certainly wasn't shy about stating his view that the ground offensive ended too soon. He could have used his conquering hero status to a just end: had he uttered a word about protecting the Shiites and the Kurds from aerial slaughter, public opinion might have forced Bush to act. In the end, the coalition's forces did not help the Kurds until after their revolution failed and the government-run bloodshed had concluded. Thus American soldiers ended up involved in Iraqi internal affairs anyway, which is precisely what Bush said he wished to avoid, but without the compensating virtues of saving lives or deposing Saddam.

Yet the greatest moral failing of the Gulf war was not our late help to the Shiites and the Kurds. It was the refusal of the West to come to terms with, or so much as discuss, not accidental civilian deaths, but the 100,000 dead among the perfectly valid Iraqi military targets.

Katherine Boo of *The Washington Monthly* has noted that throughout the war American news organizations ran tally boxes of the casualties, listing in one column how many American soldiers had perished and in another column how many Iraqi tanks, APCs, and planes had been "killed." There was no mention of Iraqi deaths: as though the object of the exercise was merely to dispatch hunks of machinery, not human beings. Powell's famous declaration about the Iraqi army—"we're going to cut it off, then we're going to kill it"—neatly edited out all consideration of the enemy's humanity.

Dozens of videos were released by the Pentagon showing smart bombs barreling into inanimate objects like missile bunkers; but it is surely worth remarking that so far there has not been released, about this war fought in the video age, a single foot of film depicting anything resembling combat involving human beings. Military censors went crazy when one field commander let reporters watch a gun camera video from an Apache gunship that snuck up on an Iraqi squad. In the tape, terror-stricken teenagers rush wildly in all directions as cannon rounds from the helicopter, which they can't see, slice their bodies in half. This video was quickly withdrawn from circulation. When I asked a senior Pentagon official why, he replied, "If we let people see that kind of thing, there would never again be any war."

Among the Iraqi military casualties there were those who deserved their fates. But most were confused, frightened village boys trapped by forces that they did not understand into a war that they did not support begun by a dictator whom they looked to the United States to rid them of. Did a single German or Japanese soldier in World War II surrender chanting "USA, USA," as did many Iraqis? In our spectacular "costless" victory, there ought to be room to express grief over the thousands of essentially innocent losses of the other side. But then empathy for the other side's losses, even if it did not vitiate the purposes of the war, would certainly spoil the party: the parades, the all-star tributes, the reelection campaign snippets, the $60,000 speeches, the action figure and lunchbox marketing tie-ins.

Schwarzkopf has brushed off all questions about how many Iraqi troops were killed, and the major news organizations, knowing they had rooted for the fight, were only too happy to oblige. There is no shame in a general taking actions that end lives. Until we live in a better world, that is what soldiers are for. There is shame, however, in refusing to discuss the deaths caused, while being all too happy, for a price, to natter on about anything else.

And Saddam rules in Baghdad still. True, his conventional army is broken; but this force, having shown ineptitude in its war with Iran and then collapsed in 100 hours against a solid foe, never threatened any state much stronger than an emirate. Saddam's nuclear program, his true threat to regional peace, continues. And his people are beginning their thirty-third year of rule by a succession of deranged petty tyrants whose principal achievements have been to heap suffering on their own citizenry. For all our talk of liberating Kuwait, we magnanimous Americans have missed the fact that the largest single group of people in need of liberation in the Middle East live in Iraq.

The lesson of Vietnam, that military force cannot solve political problems, seems to be the lesson of the Gulf war, too. Our leaders, political and military, say that they are God-fearing men, and no doubt they pray that the souls of the fallen on both sides may find in the hereafter the peace that they were denied in this life. May those of us remaining in the here and now have no delusions about the limits of what we accomplished in Desert Storm. •

Canon Fodder

BY LAWRENCE LIPKING

The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age by Joseph M. Levine

(Cornell University Press, 448 pp., $29.95)

A mysterious virus has broken out in the libraries. Once again, as in the age of Swift, the ancient and modern books are fighting each other. But this time a host of smart new weapons is intensifying the carnage. Young warriors blow up the most respected masters of the old guard; the gods themselves disappear in puffs of smoke. Exposed to fresh air, the pages of classics suddenly turn yellow and crumble. Meanwhile the hordes are at the gates. Vast throngs of books, under a thousand multicolored banners of race, class, and gender, clamor to be admitted, whether or not the shelves have room for them. But the ancients control the magazines and retaliate by raining down

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broadsides. Many titles are permanently canceled. Patriots knock off foreign invaders, but the gassy debris falls on the defenders' heads and covers the stacks like dust. Yet the most feared new weapons are electronic. Whole libraries are reduced to a few discs and the ancient books converted into code, almost unreadable. No one seems able to find out where literature has gone. Worst of all, something seems to have happened to the texts; the words are still there, but they no longer make as much sense. Perhaps the virus has become unstoppable and libraries, as we used to know them, are doomed. And yet the ancients and the moderns go on fighting.

This war began in the seventeenth century. The rival armies who defined themselves then agreed on very little, but they did agree that the future of civilization hung on the outcome. They may have been right. Many issues that occupy intellectuals now—the canon debate, historical revisionism, the tension between theory and practice, and not least questions about the worth of civilization itself—descend from those old battles. We tread their battered grounds.

But what was at stake in the war? In the heat of battle, the cause of anger is often forgotten. The victors, as usual, have managed to stamp their own version of events into the history books. Thus Moderns know that the issue from the first was modern values: truth and freedom of thought. When R.F. Jones told the story in *Ancients and Moderns*, which originally appeared in 1936, he put the rise of scientific knowledge at the center. His heroes were Francis Bacon and the "Bacon-faced generation" of the Royal Society; he took the experimental method as his guiding star and progress as his creed. In these terms the Ancients could serve only as enemies of truth, slaves to the blind authority that had shuttered Galileo's light. But truth would eventually out. One advantage to this description of the war is that it gives almost every reader a party to root for. If the Moderns fought for truth, then surely their cause was just, and still is. To doubt that the right side won, as Heidegger doubted, would be as perverse as sharing his regrets about the outcome of the Second World War. Who wants to take a stand against freedom of thought?

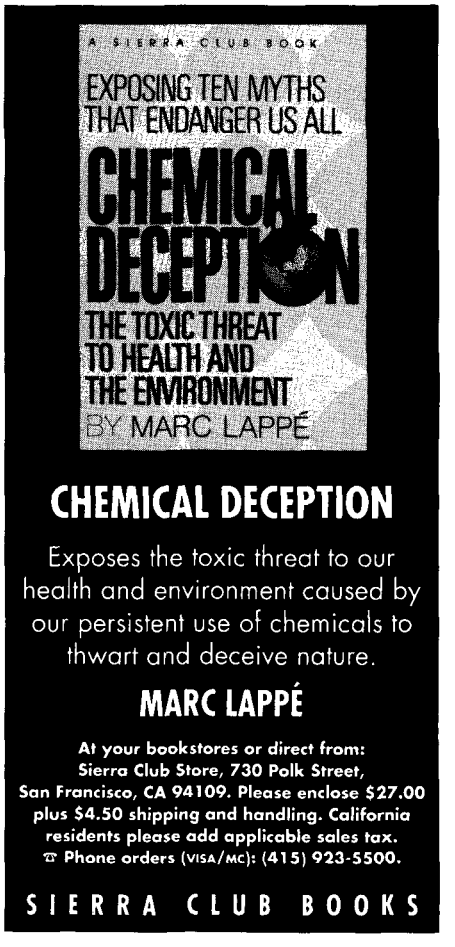
Yet the story might be told in a different way. What did the two sides fight for? Not truth, but ownership of the past, according to Joseph M. Levine. Both parties agreed, he points out, on the value of Greek and Latin classics. A good education consisted of teaching students to model themselves on those texts. But who understood them best? Here was the bone of contention. For the Ancients, the past was transparent and timeless, an authority not to be questioned. For the Moderns, it was an object of study, not timeless but changing through time. Hence modern scholarship could mold the past, correcting its errors and setting the record straight. Which side would write the histories, whose texts would be taught in the schools: those were the spoils of combat. A historian himself, Levine views the work of history-making as crucial. Hence he has composed a history of the history of history, the narrative of a past war over the past.

From this point of view, truth itself may be forced to yield to superior wit and style. William Wotton and Richard Bentley were great modern scholars who may have been right more often than Jonathan Swift, but Swift trained more readers to see the past his way. "A Full and True Account of the Battel Fought last Friday, Between the Ancient and the Modern Books in St. James's Library" has prevailed by the crucial test of a paper war: unlike the books it satirizes, it remains in print. Swift does not fight fair. He allows the Moderns no learning. They are mere spiders, spinning schemes out of their own entrails ("the Guts of *Modern* Brains"), while the Ancients are bees who furnish mankind "with the two Noblest of Things, which are *Sweetness* and *Light*." Moreover, the battle is fought on ancient turf. In mock-epic style, the ancient and modern champions joust in hand-to-hand combat according to the rules of Homer and Virgil, with sword and lance and shield. No modern weapons, no guns or crossbows or Christian polemics, are granted the Moderns. How could they ever win?

Levine redresses the balance. Unlike Swift's, his *The Battle of the Books* does not take sides. He tells his story well. By focusing on one country, England, and one brief span of time, 1690-1740, he is able to shape a coherent and satisfying narrative, with a dramatic beginning, some surprising turns of events, and a logical denouement. There is also plenty of human interest—strong personalities and rabid factions. Levine seems at home in this world, a scholar among scholars. Nor does he weight the scale toward the Moderns, like Jones. Despite the tendency of any modern historian to favor modern standards of evidence, this book works hard to play fair. Above all, it gives the Ancients their due.

Some readers may stick at this. For ancient attitudes appear, by some modern lights, not only infuriating but preposterous. Thus Sir William Temple, who started the quarrel with "An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning" (1690), maintains the superiority of ancient learning not only in the arts but in the sciences, assumes that the best discoveries of modern times must have been secretly known to ancient philosophers and magicians, compares Homer to Gondibert (but not to Milton), and prefers the ancient music he has never heard to the "fiddling" of such contemporaries as Purcell. The oldest books, he is sure, are always the best. "I think the Epistles of *Phalaris* to have more Race, more Spirit, more Force of Wit and Genius, than any others I have ever seen." Unfortunately, as Bentley proved, those epistles were clumsy forgeries, dating from seven centuries after Phalaris. Yet Temple was hardly embarrassed. Indeed, his allies ridiculed Bentley's pedantry and lack of taste so cleverly that the voice of the public decided against him. Old prejudices are believed just because they are old.

The shiftiness of the ancient position comes through most plainly when writers call themselves "Ancients." The word papers over the difference between two distinct sets, those who once lived in Greece and Rome and those moderns who identify with them. Phalaris was not the only forged ancient; Temple himself (who could not read the epistles in Greek) was an ancient only in his own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fancy. This confusion goes far beyond terms; it defines the person himself. The moderns who claim to be ancients acknowledge their own belatedness, their secondhand status. They even value themselves on being copies. For centuries a good British education consisted of drills in Latin and Greek, with the highest prizes reserved for the best imitations of classical style. Some schoolboys grew up regarding themselves as Roman. This seems, on the face of it, a very strange way to prepare a British citizen to deal with modern life. At best a Johnny-come-lately Ancient will feel detached from his own times. At worst he will live a lie.

All this seems preposterous, this yearning after the ancients. But one rather infuriating point must be made in its favor: much of the time it works. Whatever the faults of Temple's logic, people admired his style, not only as a writer but as a practical man of affairs. He had earned his credit through celebrated acts of statesmanship: negotiating the Triple Alliance, smoothing the way for the marriage of William and Mary. Even his retirement was exemplary, a classical cultivation of apricots and elegant letters, not to mention bees. Moreover, he ascribed all his success to education. He had learned to talk to foreigners by practicing on Cicero and Caesar. The humanist ideal of eloquence, preparing the young to govern by grooming them to think and speak like ancients, was calculated to produce a Temple. All that he was he owed to ancient teachers.

Nor did it matter that his scholarship was thin. A statesman needs to know the universal principles of human nature, not the peculiarities of texts. Thus the letters of Phalaris offered a perfect image of "the Tyrant and the Commander," an image that could help a diplomat to predict the behavior of Louis XIV or Saddam Hussein. In this sense, they were invaluable and authentic. Only a grammarian would care more for the letter than the spirit of such treasure. Pedants might argue about the text and where it came from; wise men would simply use it.

Then as now, this line of thought has tended to drive scholars crazy. Surely it *does* matter whether or not Phalaris wrote his own letters, not only for the sake of truth, but for the reader's trust in what they say. An education based on corrupt texts, on slips and blots and myths and forgeries, will lead to bad copy and bogus wisdom, if not to loss of confidence in the very tradition it holds dear. Texts, like people, cannot afford to lose their reputation for integrity.

Hence Moderns consider themselves the true defenders of the classics, preserving them from decay and misappropriation. A good philologist and textual critic must know the ancients perfectly—better, in fact, than they knew themselves. Since antiquity is not all of a piece, a sound historical method needs to place each work once more in its own time. Such Moderns as Wotton and Bentley developed that method, and they were amazingly learned. (Wotton, at 5, could read Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and by 11 he had added Arabic, Syriac, and most of the modern languages.) No wonder that they thought they owned not only the letters of the ancients, but also their spirit.

The accomplishments of the Moderns were mighty, and every textual scholar remains in their debt. Nor did they limit their efforts to Greece and Rome. As Shakespeare became a classic, for instance, his plays turned into a battleground for Ancients and Moderns. An Ancient like Pope removed some passages that did not please him and mended the barbarism of Elizabethan English. A Modern like Lewis Theobald insisted on restoring the original text. Hence Theobald gained a place as King of Dullness in Pope's *Dunciad*. Still, it tends to be his principles (and his readings of lines) that later editors have adopted. Taste fades, learning lasts.

Yet even the best of textual editors may suffer from an occupational disease, which is the delusion that the works that he edits belong to him. Consider Bentley's Milton. Convinced that he understood the meaning of classical texts better than anyone else—indeed, often better than the author—the great old scholar set out to correct the many "mistakes" of *Paradise Lost*. Milton himself could not have been so careless; some unknown copyist must have betrayed him. Thus Bentley scoured the text of the poem as if it were a particularly corrupt transcription of Aramaic. The result was a travesty. Not even Swift could have invented a better image of modern pride than this dummy Milton, piled high with learned lumber, through which the ventriloquist-scholar keeps piping up. Just what an Ancient might have expected!

In a satire of "Verbal Criticism," quoted by *The Battle of the Books*, Pope's ally David Mallet crows over his foe, as Bentley,

> ... prime pattern of the captious art,
> Out tibbalding poor Tibbald, taps his part;
> Holds high the Scourge o'er each fam'd author's head,
> Nor are their graves and refuges for the dead;
> To Milton lending sense, to Horace wit,
> He makes them write what never poet writ.

So at least my proof copy reads. But verbal criticism tells me that much has gone wrong. Surely, in the second line, "taps" ought to be "tops" (to top a part, on the stage, is to outdo it). The fourth line is a metrical and semantic mess; presumably Mallet wrote "a refuge," not "and refuges." In line six, the clash of consonants in "makes them" offends my eighteenth-century ear; a competent poet must have said "makes 'em." And still I am not satisfied. The passage does not yet look like eighteenth-century verse. Shorn of italics and capitals (save for the improbable S in "Scourge"), it has obviously been *modernized*. No child of Bentley—and all modern textual scholars are Bentley's children—would take such a text on faith. Like a scrap of antique parchment, it cannot realize its full effect without some expert reconstruction. So perhaps the verbal critic has the last laugh.

And yet the Moderns are still outnumbered. Not many people care about the bona fides of the texts they read; and history is supposed to tell a story, not to examine evidence. An editor who calls attention to himself attracts hostility. Similarly, a readable translation has more appeal than whatever scholarship has made it possible. Thus Pope's *Iliad was* Homer, for thousands of readers. The fact that he hardly understood Greek, that his historical and textual learning was elementary, that he borrowed or stole freely from better scholars, and that he substituted rhyming couplets and English manners for the sound and world of Homer, did not discourage his public. Where could they find a better Homer? Certainly not in the learned commentaries of philologists. Moderns like Bentley might scorn the poor poet ("'Tis a pretty poem Mr. Pope, but it is not Homer"), but they could not compete with the pleasure he offered. Above all, he made readers feel ancient—no longer conscious of how little they knew, but enjoying the sense that Homer's world could be their own.

Most readers still feel the same way. They like the great books to seem familiar, a common possession in which the universal truths of human nature outlast whatever languages or customs temporarily clothe them. Nature and Homer ought to be the same. There is something immensely comforting about the idea that history always comes back to the same few themes, that the past is not a foreign country but the place one comes from. Hence the Ancients remain the more popular party.

In this regard, the current debates about cultural literacy and the canon may be seen as one more skirmish in the bat

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tle of the books. To Moderns, it seems obvious that new times require new subjects of thought and methods of understanding. Even the classics are not transparent; each generation must read or reject them according to its own interests. Nor does the Constitution mean what it meant 200 years ago. Yet much of the public spurns such an argument, and thinks of education as a means of teaching the young to know what their elders know. Ancient barricades guard the past. The sciences are allowed to change, the humanities are not. So we learn the good old books and movies by heart, embalming ancient refrains. Play it again: the fundamental things apply as time goes by. William Temple might have written those words.

Levine ends his book with a truce or an anticlimax. Neither the Ancients nor the Moderns won the war, and the histories that both sides wrote have long been forgotten. Moreover, the arguments turned stale with repetition. Each side had too great a stake in the past to bargain any of it away. Something similar has been happening lately in the debate about the canon, as the conflict about principles of education declines into a scuffle over turf. Perhaps the time has come for library disarmament. Too many of the ancient and modern books have been disfigured. Give them more room, and they will get on with each other. This war has lasted long enough already.

Those who cannot remember the past, Santayana very famously said, are condemned to repeat it. He might have added, so are those who can.

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 2*

Unless that process is to be a sham, nominees and sitting justices should not be committed to a decision before the case is heard.

Second, to take one example: "Governor Warren, what is your analysis of the constitutionality of school segregation?" Pinning down nominees in this way would stunt their capacity to grow on the Court. That black robe is worn not just to garner respect from the public but to heighten the wearer's sense of responsibility. Boxing Judge Thomas in may be everyone's favorite way of ensuring that stooges sit on the Court, but we don't want mouthpieces on the bench. We have elections for executives and legislators for such.

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To the editors:

Michael Kinsley states, "Presidents themselves used to be far less ideological in their Supreme Court nominations." For proof, he noted that President "Eisenhower picked Brennan and Warren." Though Ike gave considerable clout to political factors—including geographical considerations for Warren and religious ones for Brennan—he was not apathetic about judicial philosophy. Ike believed Warren and Brennan were genuinely moderate nominees. To his horror, they turned out to be unabashed judicial activists. When asked to describe his greatest mistake as president, Ike claimed, "Two, and they are both sitting on the Supreme Court."

President Kennedy's nomination of Byron White has also become the subject of revisionism. White was far from being a political or ideological foe of Kennedy's. According to Henry J. Abraham's book *Justices and Presidents*, White was a close friend of Kennedy's since the late 1930s. At the time of his nomination, White was deputy U.S. attorney general under Robert Kennedy, who described the criteria his brother used in selecting a nominee: "You wanted someone who generally agreed with you on what role government should play in American life, what role the individual in society should have."

GREGG WILLHAUCK
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TRB *continued from page 4*

briefs, is one of impatience. Is it really possible that federal judges lack the authority to protect citizens from organized mobs systematically denying them the ability to exercise their constitutional rights? If so, the law ought to be changed. Could groups organize to shout down speakers from opposing points of view, for example, and would the government be powerless to prevent them? If so, it's a shocking gap.

William Bradford Reynolds, who was head of the Justice Department's civil rights division at the time of the Bob Jones shame, wrote fatuously in *The New York Times* the other day that it's an insult to state courts to suggest that federal judges need to step in to protect abortion rights. But if the rights were being sufficiently protected by state courts, neither the abortion clinics nor Operation Rescue would care whether federal judges could step in. Operation Rescue's leaders see the Bush administration involvement as a boon to their campaign to forcibly shut down abortion clinics. They're not wrong.

President Bush does not believe in abortion rights, or claims not to. But as president he cannot openly endorse mob action to deprive people of rights that are still the law of the land. So he and his administration resort to technicalities. The solution is simple. The Ku Klux Klan Act is only a statute, not a constitutional provision. It is easily amended. Congress ought to pass a new statute, stripped of all the complications. If Bush were presented with the bald proposition, in the form of a bill, that the federal government ought to be able to protect people in the exercise of their federal constitutional rights, would he have the gall to veto it? If the Democrats were a bit faster on their feet, they could have a bill like this on Bush's desk in a week. It would leave him in a bind he truly deserves.

Operation Rescue believes that abortion is an evil worse than slavery, and that the moral imperative of ending it outweighs considerations of respect for law. Those who think this way cannot be dissuaded, though they need to be reminded that true civil disobedience honors the principle of law by accepting punishment, not evading it. And, of course, slavery did not end through civil disobedience but through constitutional amendments that followed a brutal war. Nevertheless, perhaps history will crown these zealots as heroes for taking the law into their own hands. I doubt it. Meanwhile, though, a democratic government cannot acknowledge its own illegitimacy. It must protect human rights as it has chosen to define them, and not tolerate their denial by a virulent minority, however sincere.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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NEW YORK DIARIST

Clagic trash

THE BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF Music is not where Verdi is supposed to come to mind. Such ancient associations, every program and every haircut in the building tells you, belong in midtown. Still, at intermission the other night, at the opening of *The Death of Klinghoffer*, I was reminded of Verdi's complaint to a friend about the censoriousness of the culture in which his works about politics and power were written. "How many subjects there are in our own history," he grumbled, "but unfortunately if we want something at all effective we must, to our shame, resort to foreign things." An opera about political assassination in eighteenth-century Sweden had to be removed to fourteenth-century Florence, until the censor compromised on eighteenth-century Boston; and the treatment of nationalism, the inflammatory sentiment of the day, was banished to ancient Babylon or ancient Egypt. So bully for John Adams, I thought. America does not demand allegory of its artists. Here Adams can put headlines to music and defy his society's nerves directly. First *Nixon in China*, now *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Verdi, if you will pardon the expression, would have been green with envy.

BUT WHAT A RESORT TO FOREIGN things John Adams, and his librettist Alice Goodman, and his director Peter Sellars, and his choreographer Mark Morris, have produced! It took merely the prologue to demonstrate that all these darlings were themselves tourists on the *Achille Lauro*, that none of them had even the shred of a genuine entanglement with the events on that terrorized deck, or with the excruciating history that led to them. "The idea of a second opera started floating around," Adams has written of the origins of the work, "and again it was Peter [Sellars] who had the title, if not much else: *The Death of Klinghoffer*." He began with the title! And it showed: the randomness of the enterprise, its gestural quality, its utter bloodlessness, was more than a little chilling.

THE OPERA HAS TWO ARGUMENTS, which I take to be the work of Goodman. Both of them are morally obtuse. The first is that the conflict between two peoples, exiled and in love with the same land, may be represented by the conflict between Leon Klinghoffer and the terrorists who killed him. But it is not a conflict when a man with a submachine gun confronts a man in a wheelchair. It is a crime. It poses no challenge to the imagination and no puzzle to the conscience. And for that reason it cannot be the stuff of which strenuous art is made. Goodman's libretto is pretty addled. Sometimes it wants to be "evenhanded," that euphemism for impatience with the scars of Israel, and sometimes it does not flinch from giving the Palestinian terrorists in all their ugliness. Its evenhandedness is most pronounced and most confused in the "Chorus of Exiled Palestinians" and the "Chorus of Exiled Jews." The Palestinians begin: "My father's house was razed / In nineteen forty-eight." Lucid, historical, the plain ground of a just grievance. The Jews begin: "When I paid off the taxi, I had no money left." Obscure, tasteless, a whine. (Paid off the taxi?!) The "exiled Jews," by the way, turn out to be Israelis, who are not exiled Jews; and they are given no clear statement of their reasons for struggle.

THERE ARE EXILED JEWS, OF course, in the plot. They are American Jews: the Klinghoffers, and their friends the Rumors, who appear only in the prologue. The Rumors are the big tip-off, to the second argument of the opera and to its controlling impulse. They are said to sit in "a living room in New Jersey, carpeted in ivory. There is a pastel-colored 'Jackson Pollock' hanging over the ivory couch." And they bicker, speak in suburban banalities, consider the coffee machine, recall Harrods' Winter Sale. Precisely the sort of people who wouldn't know a Jackson Pollock from a "Jackson Pollock." Most important, they introduce the peculiar manner of discourse that has been inflicted by the librettist upon their friends the Klinghoffers.

THE KLINGHOFFERS DO NOT HAVE much to say in this adaptation of their torture. Leon has one air, Marilyn has two. Leon's is an apologia ("We both / Have tried to live / Good lives. / We give / Gladly, receive Gratefully, love / And take pleasure / In small things"), which is followed by a denunciation of his captors ("You just want to see / People die. / You're crazy"), which concludes with the rousing observation that "I should have worn a hat." Like he said, small things. Before she learns that Leon has been shot, Marilyn sings a long and irritating piece about diseases and doctors ("Those replacement / Joints they have today, / They're miracles"). After she learns that Leon has been shot, Marilyn still sings in her trivial, dilatory way ("My best friend, / Is killed by a punk / While I think of this and that"), still sings of her ailments, and remembers her martyred husband for bringing her aspirin from the kitchen. More small things.

SHE IS GIVEN, I HASTEN TO ADD, a few last lyrical lines ("I grieve / As a pregnant woman / Grieves for the unseen / Long-imagined son": for the "Sophoclean imponderability" that drew Adams to the subject Goodman has returned a very un-Sophoclean imponderability), but nothing like the transports of lyricism that spill from the mouths of the terrorists. They are creatures of symbolism and deep themes. They soar with the birds above the boat toward God. They sing of lovers, and they experience their guns with their senses. They remind themselves of Esau. In sum, no small things. The terrorists are killers, but they are romantics. Regular flowers of evil with 5 o'clock shadows. So the victims and the victimizers have different brows. Get it? This opera is a cheap and self-satisfied attack by a self-styled American avant-garde upon the ordinariness and the philistinism of the American bourgeoisie tricked out as the study of a tragic clash in Zion. *That* is what the Klinghoffers were doing at BAM.

THE PROBLEM WITH CONDESCENsion, however, is that it raises a standard. If others are small, then you had better be large. The distinction must be justified. The opera must give proof that its makers are no petty Klinghoffers. But alas, out of tragic clash they have made clagic trash. There is not a bar of emotional authenticity or artistic innovation in Adams's score. It is a hollow anthology of recent influences, here a little Glass, there a little Gorecki, here a little Reich, there a little Diamond; and the writing for voice is execrable, consistently overwrought, indifferent to character. Goodman has written some of the ugliest ("Now from day to day / Evil grows exponentially ...") and most obscurantist lines that ever were asked to be sung. With the exception of a dance about Hagar and Ishmael, the dancers ran (and ran, and ran) on empty; Morris seems to have been a little bored by the task, and he contributed only his clichés. And Sellars had the people singing into a video camera Viva Verdi.

LEON WIESELTIER

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WHERE WE STAND

By Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers

What Private School Advantage?

An Oft-told Tale Debunked

Tell a story once or twice and people might be skeptical about it. Tell it 10 or 20 or 100 times, and most people will accept it as truth.

For years, we've heard that Catholic and other private schools do a far better job of educating their students than public schools. Catholic schools have gotten especially good press because, we've been told, they take kids just like the ones in public schools and get them to achieve at much higher levels. This idea is so commonly accepted that the Bush administration has cited it to justify using public money to educate students in private schools.

Now, I've never believed that private and public school students are the same kids; but, like everybody else, I bought the idea that private schools are getting better results. Then, at a recent briefing about the scores on a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics examination, my eyes were opened.

Everybody was talking about the poor student performance at all levels—and they certainly were right. But these results, though they were disastrous, were more of what we've been seeing for a long time. However, as I looked at the inch-thick book reporting the scores, I noticed something I hadn't seen before—the results for parochial and other private schools appeared alongside the public school results.

They showed that in fourth and eighth grades, private school students did outperform students from public schools. But the bottom line is what kids know and are able to do when they go to college or look for a job. And I was surprised to see that there was very little difference between the scores of high school seniors in public and private schools.

Average Proficiency and Percentage of High School Seniors at or Above Four NAEP Anchor Levels by Type of School

	Average Proficiency	Percentage of Students at or Above			
		Level 200	Level 250	Level 300	Level 350
Public Schools	295	100	90	45	5
Catholic Schools	302	100	96	54	4
Other Private Schools	301	100	97	51	4

Most seniors in public and private schools have mastered the basics, represented by levels 200 and 250. When it comes to level 300, students from Catholic and other private schools do slightly better than public school students. But if you consider that 300 represents the math that NAEP says kids are supposed to learn in seventh grade, the real story is that in both public and private schools, half our graduating seniors are still functioning at a seventh-grade level.

At the top achievement level of 350, which means a student knows some algebra and may be prepared to do college math, public school students surpass students from Catholic or other private schools (5 percent compared with 4 percent) though, again, this is nothing to brag about. In fact, it means that about 95 percent of our high school graduates—private as well as public—would be unable to get into college in any other industrialized country.

Had I been wrong in thinking that private school students were different from the kids who went to public school? Maybe that's why the scores were about the same? So I asked whether the NAEP assessments included data about student backgrounds. They did, and private school students turned out to be children who should give private schools just the advantage in performance that we've all heard about.

- In the sample of students tested by NAEP, about 50 percent more private school students had parents who were college graduates. If there is anything education research tells us, it is that higher education translates into a higher income, and both are strongly correlated with student achievement.
- Private school students take different—and more demanding— programs. For example, 81 percent of the private school seniors in the NAEP sample (in comparison with 56 percent of public school seniors) were in an academic track. And taking more academic courses (like having better-educated parents) is strongly associated with higher achievement. These and other differences between public and private school students in background and courses taken show why when you look only at the *average* scores, private school students sometimes outscore public school students. But when you compare the NAEP scores of public and private school students who have taken similar courses—if you compare apples with apples—their achievement is almost identical.

Might these NAEP scores be a fluke? In fact, there is plenty of evidence from elsewhere to back up what they tell us. I'll talk about some of it in later columns. In the meantime, there is one important thing to keep in mind.

Debunking the private school advantage that so many people take on faith is nothing to crow about. The fact is that both private and public education are doing a disastrously bad job. So if we are serious about our students' meeting world-class standards—or even being able to do seventh-grade math by the time they leave high school—private school choice is not the answer. Instead, we'd better concentrate our energies on improving *all* our schools.

To order the NAEP report, "The State of Mathematics Achievement," send $28 to Supt. of Documents, U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, DC 20402, and ask for # 065-000-00452-6.

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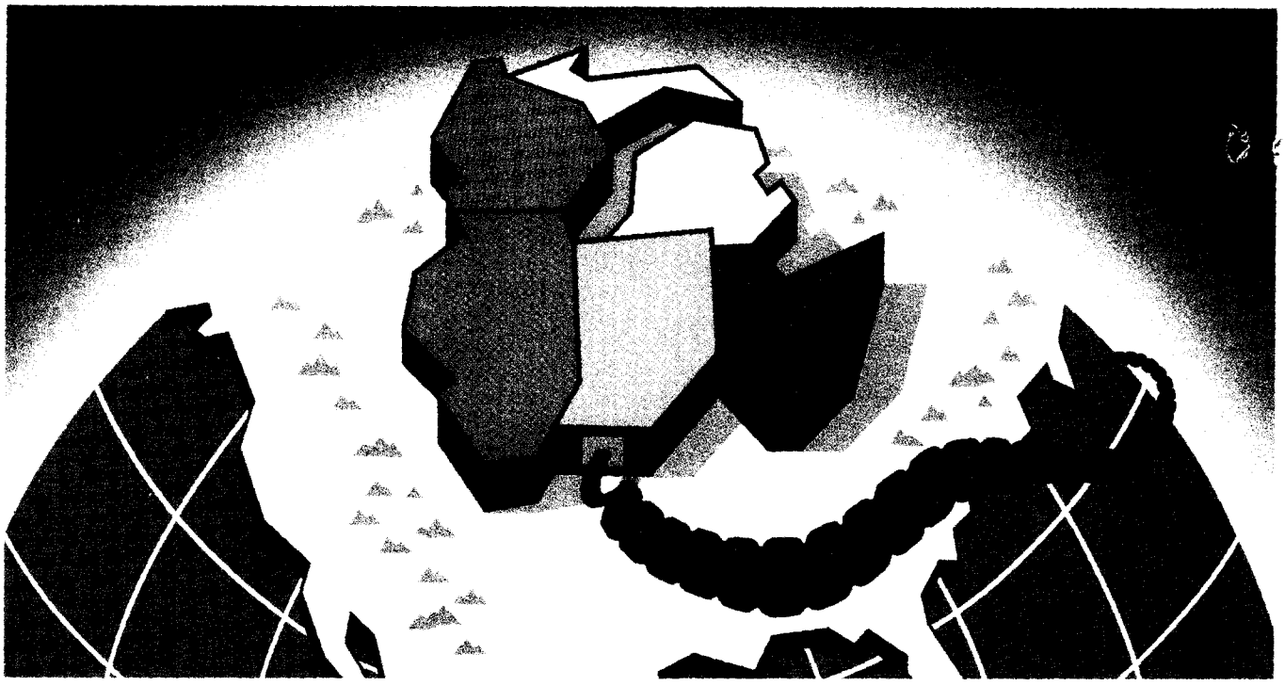

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